



 > Design & Illustration > Crafting

Bookbinding Fundamentals: Long-Stitch Leather Journal



Erica Munoz

Jul 22, 2013 • 7 min read

34 



Crafting

This post is part of a series called [85 Mother's Day Crafts](#).

[How to Make a Geo Faceted Cement Planter](#)

▶▶ [Crochet a Gorgeous Set of Rainbow Nesting Baskets](#)





There are many different bindings that fall under the category of long-stitch, but most are distinguishable by long stitches that attach gatherings of folded pages (also called signatures) directly to the cover. This tutorial will take you through every step to stitching a simple long-stitch binding to a beautiful piece of leather.

Supplies





- Scissors
- [Bone folder](#)
- 4 sheets of 45.7cm x 61cm (18in x 24in) [drawing paper](#) or sketchbook paper
- Sheet of leather 11.4cm x 28cm (8.5in x 11in)
- Waxed linen thread
- [Book binding needle](#)
- Awl
- Ruler
- Triangle (or set square)
- Cutting mat
- [Rotary cutter](#) (optional)
- X-Acto knife or [paper cutter](#)

1. Cut Your Text Block

Step 1

With a paper cutter or X-Acto knife, cut the large drawing paper width-wise into three 18cm (7in) wide strips.



Step 2

Cut each strip down into four 10cm (4in) sheets. You should end up with 36 short grain pieces of paper. ([what is short grain?](#)). These pieces will make up your text block.

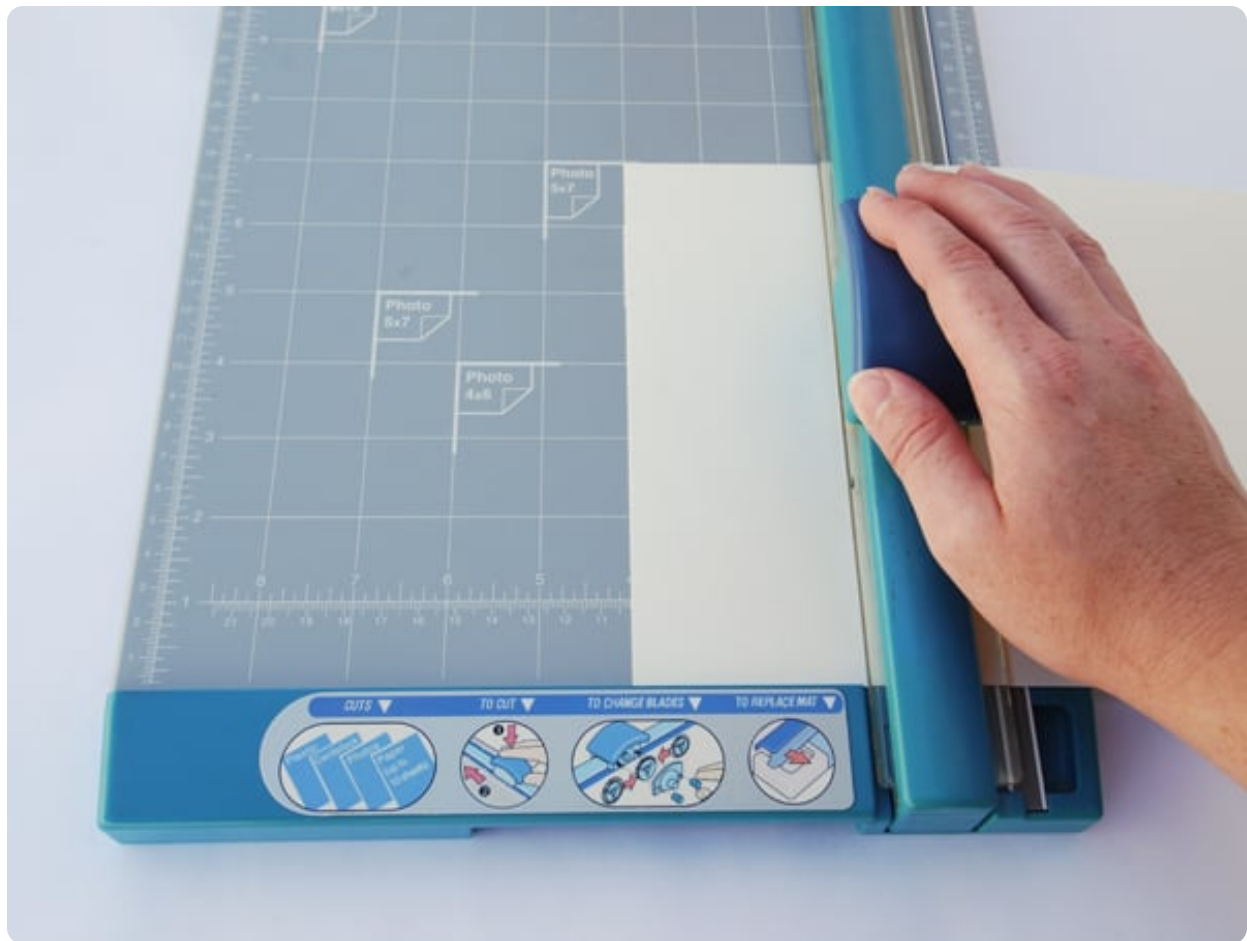
Make your best work yet

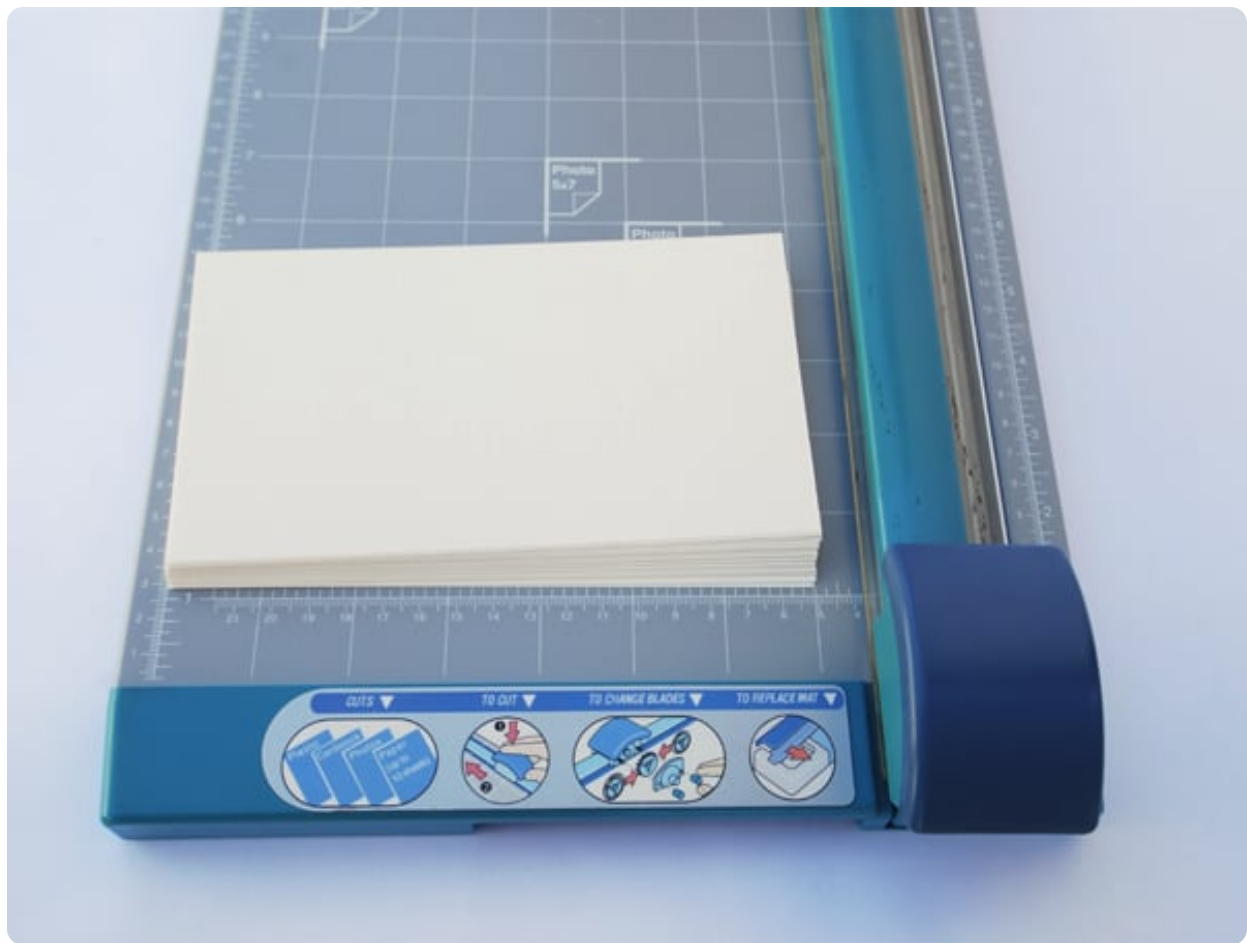
How? By signing up to receive tips, tricks, and offers designed to make you stand out.

[Sign up](#)

Unsubscribe at any time.

[Privacy Policy](#).





Advertisement

2. Cut Out Your Cover

Step 1



Cut the sheet of leather length-wise into a 10.5cm (approx 4 1/4in) wide strip.
This will make your cover.

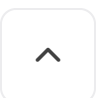




3. Make Your Signatures

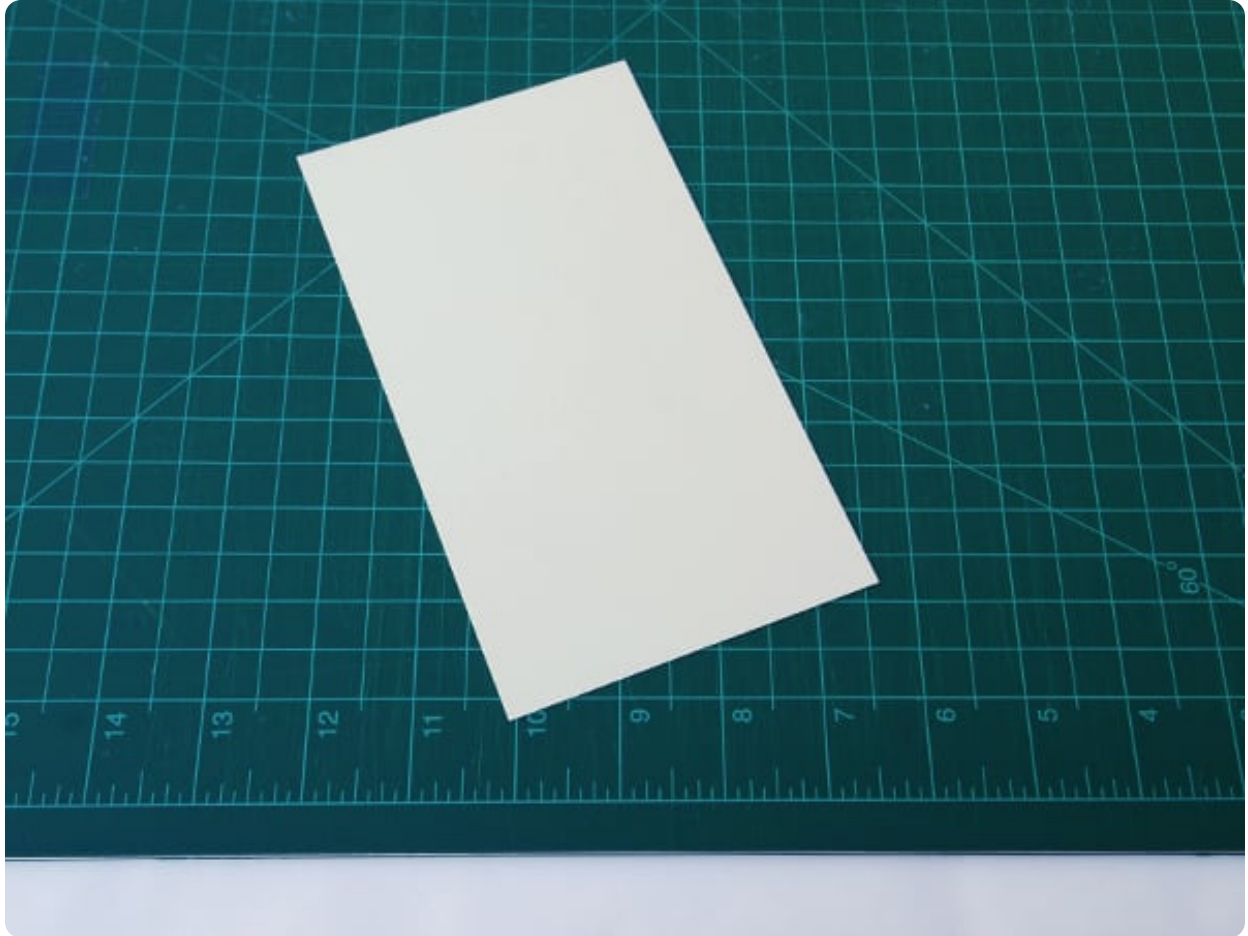


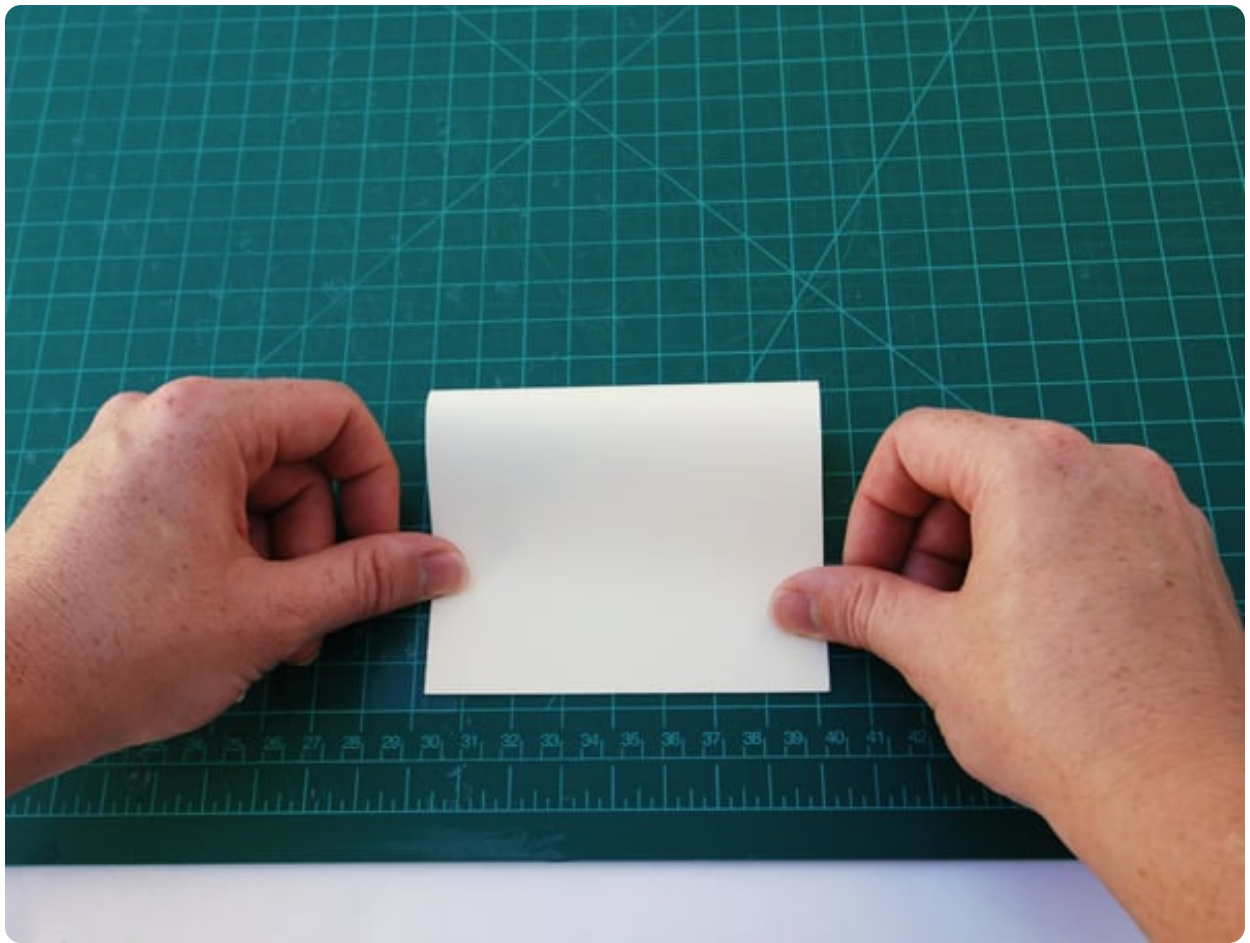
Advertisement



Step 1

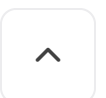
A signature is a gathering of two or more folded pages. Take a sheet of paper from your text block and gently fold it in half width-wise to make a folio. You do not want to make a sharp fold yet, so don't push down hard.

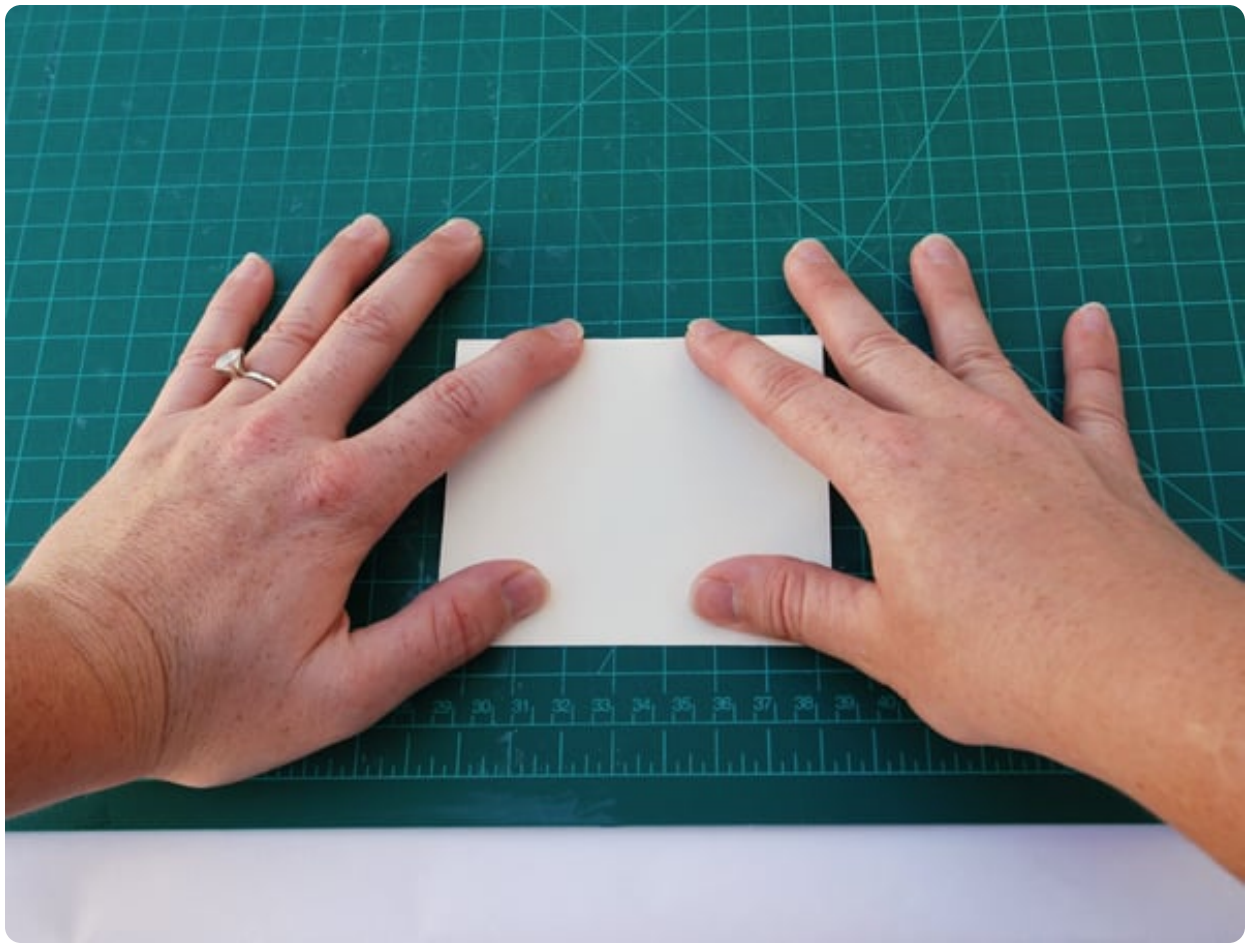




To get the most even fold, start at the middle and push out to the sides.

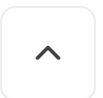
Fold all of the remaining sheets in your text block.





Step 2

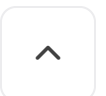
Make a signature by gathering six folios (folded sheets), one inside the other. Repeat this step until you have six signatures.

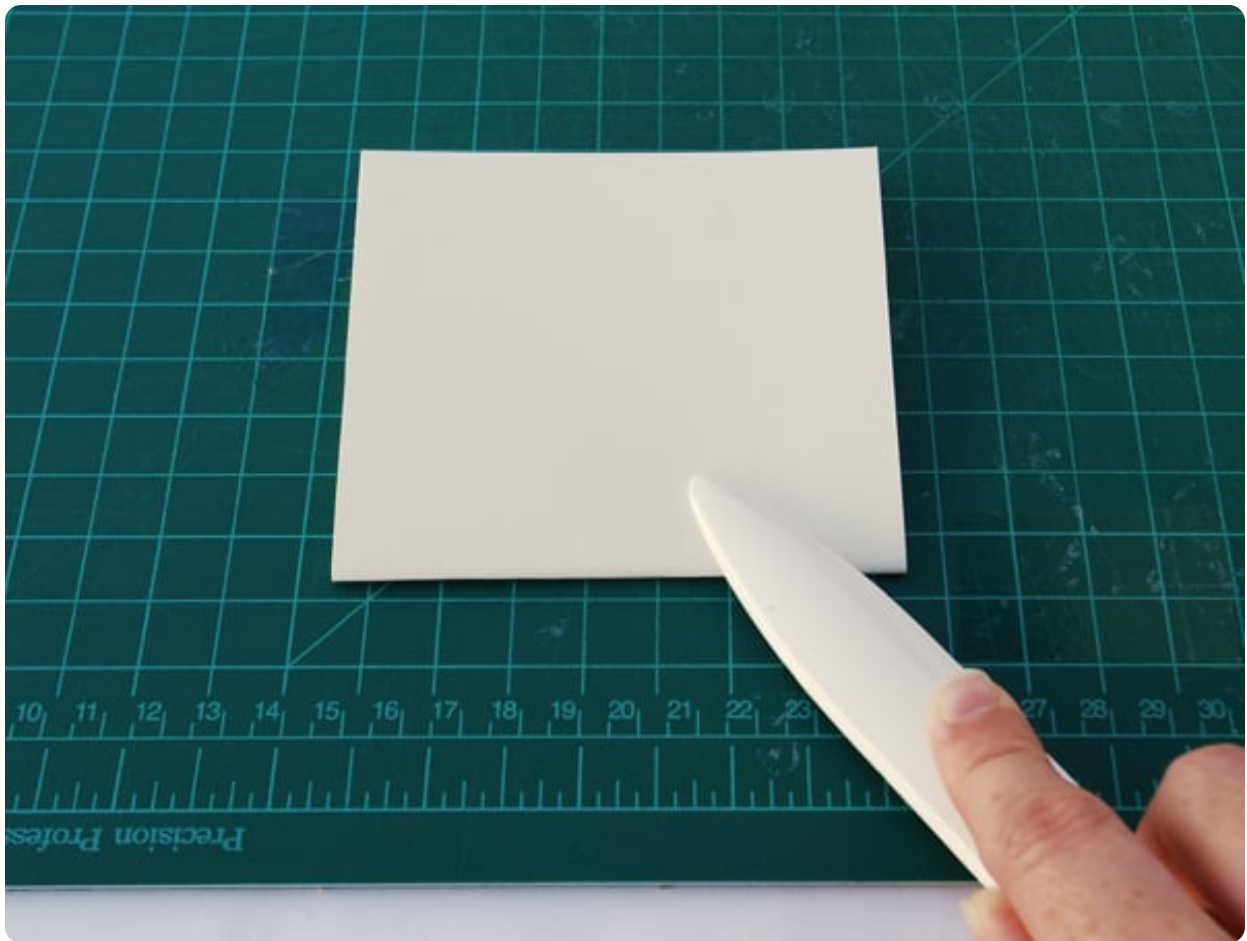




Step 3

Rub your bone fold over each signature to sharpen the folds. This will help keep the spine from being too fat.

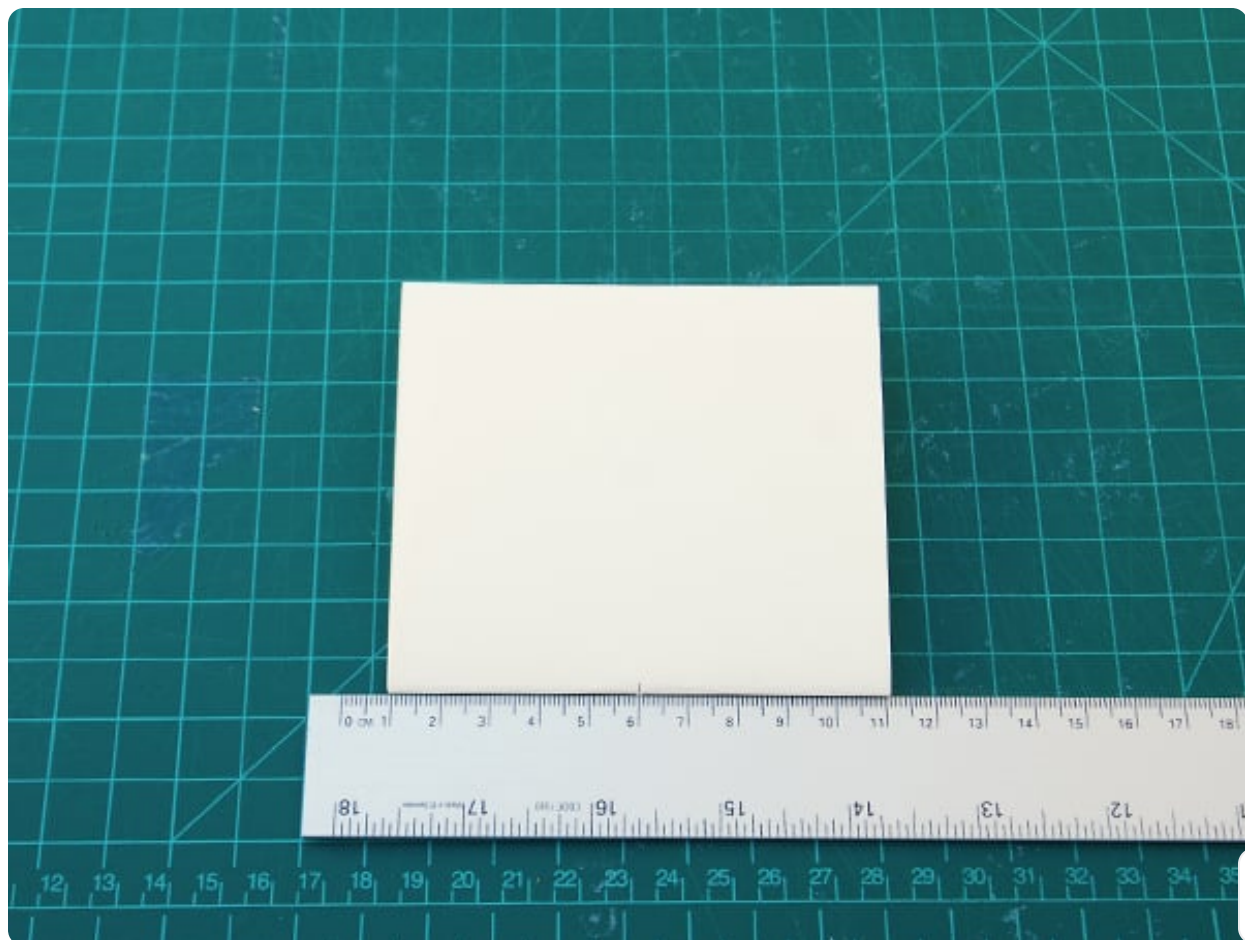


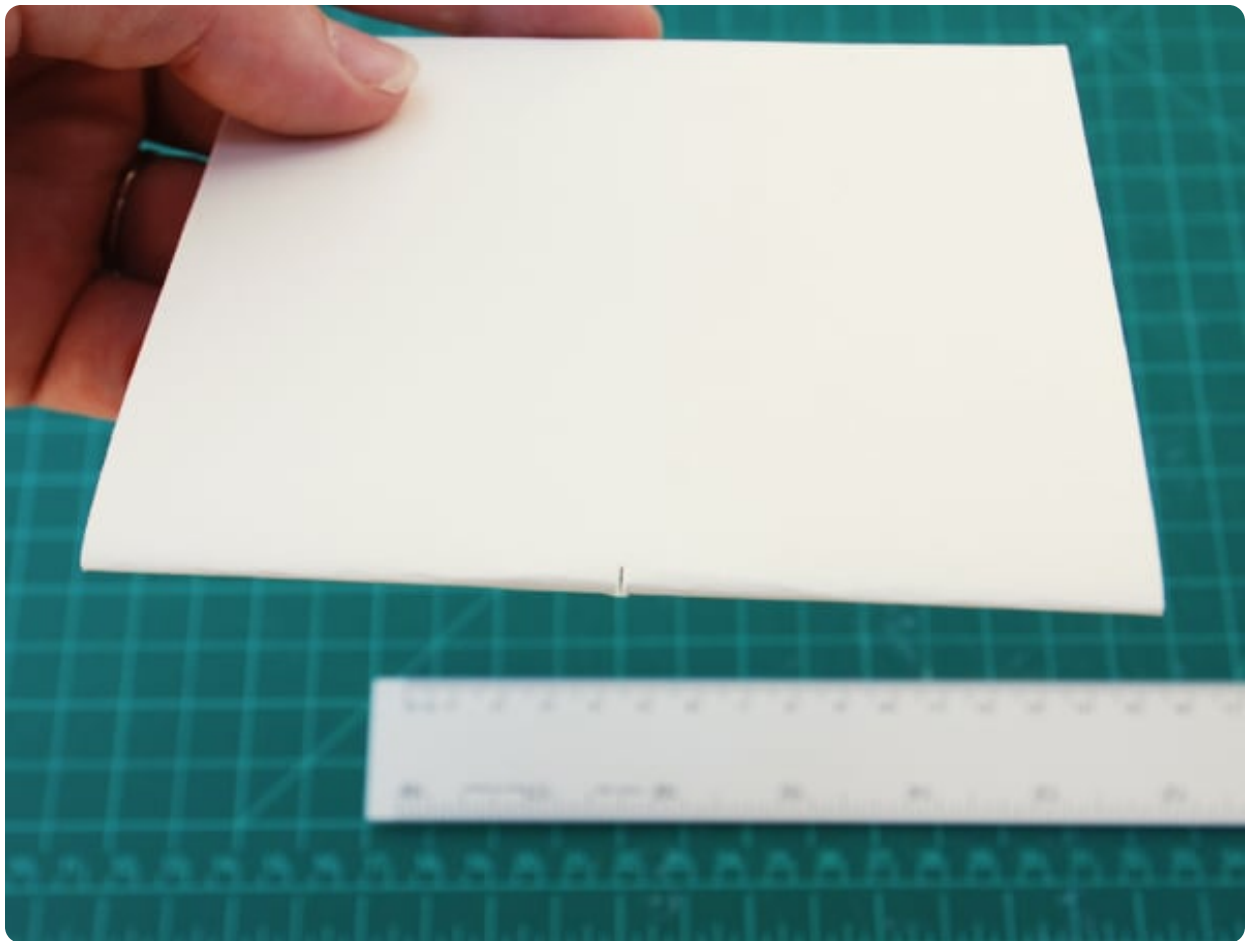


4. Cut Holes Into the Signatures

Step 1

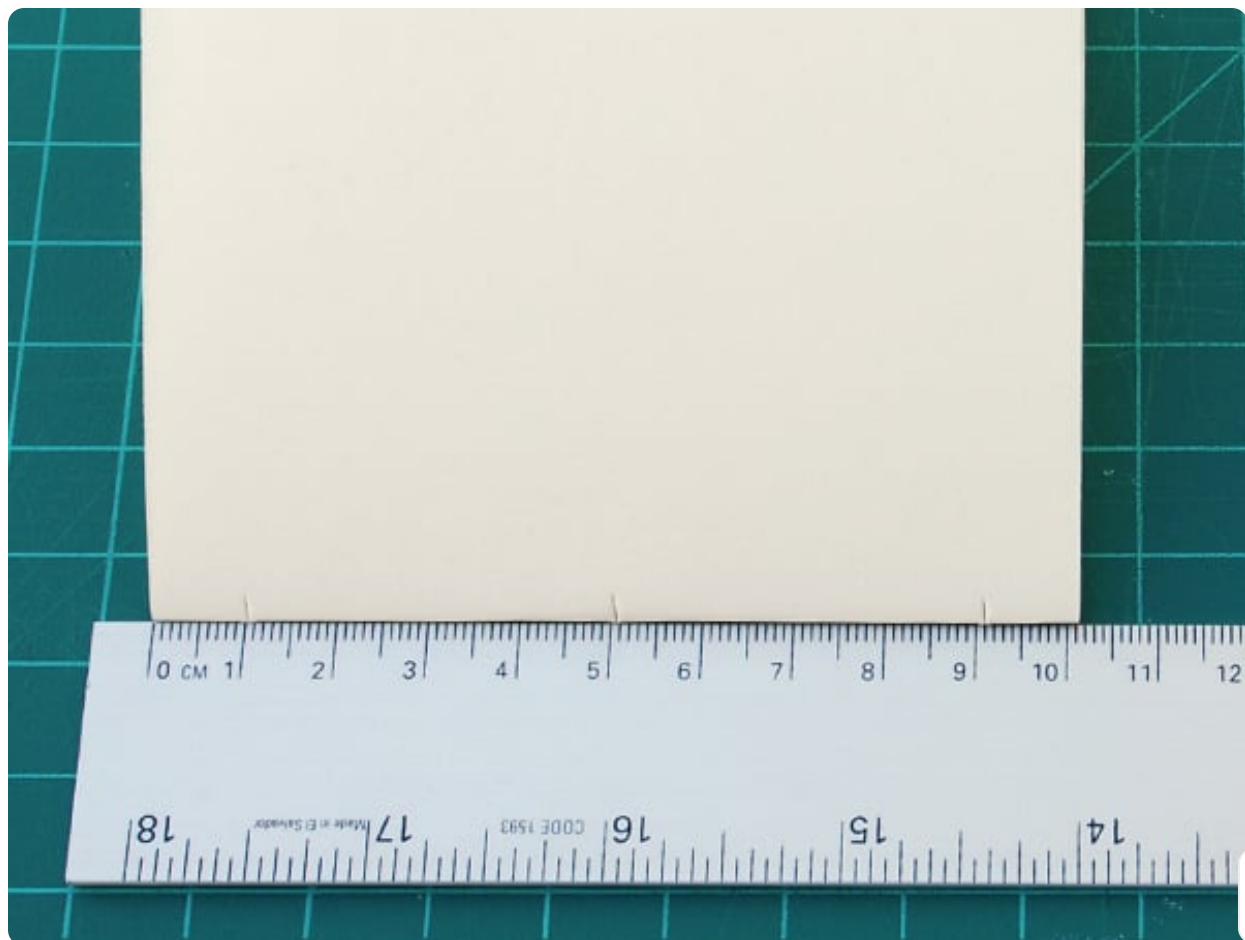
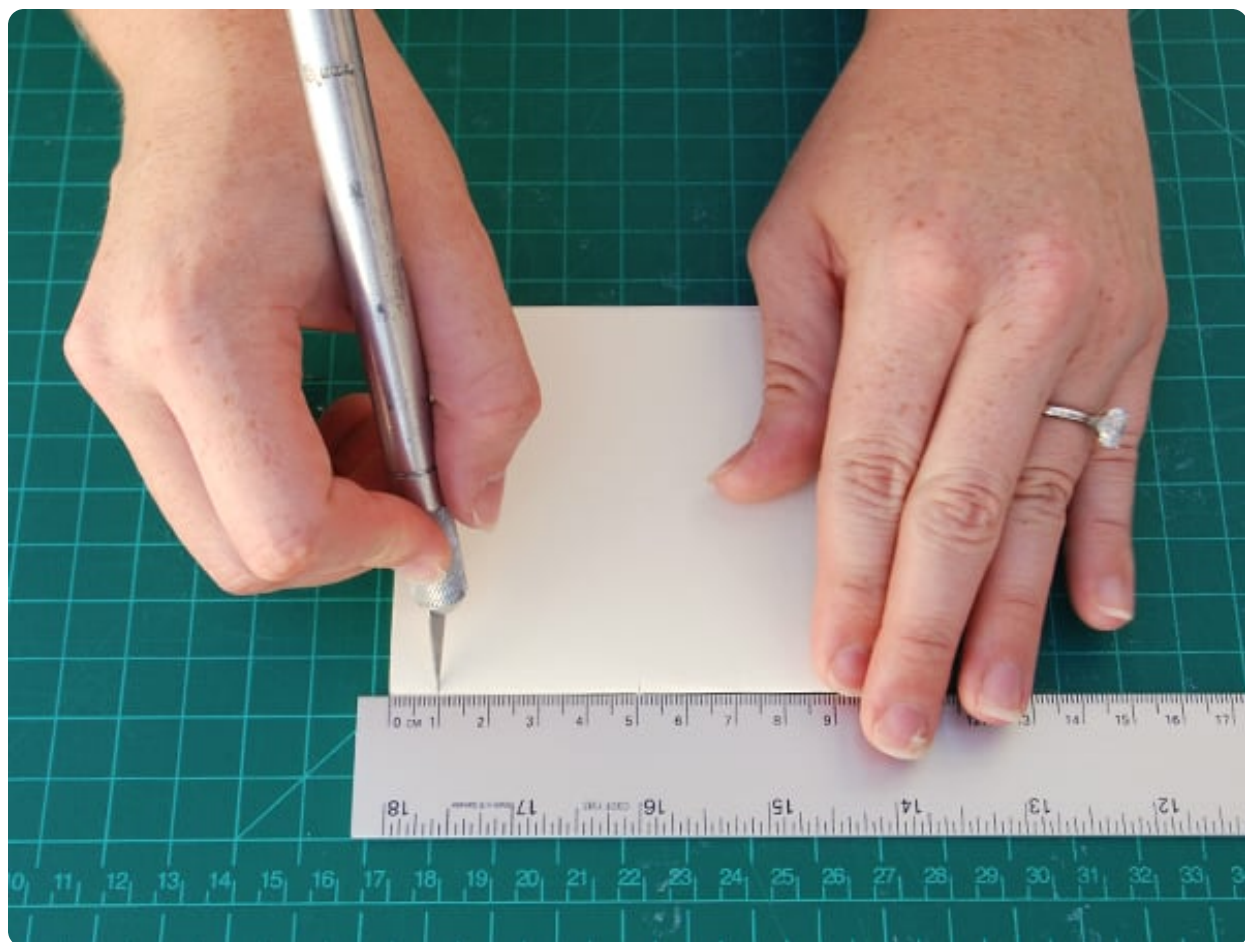
Grab a signature and use your ruler to find the center of the folded side. Make a small cut or notch with an X-Acto knife. Make the cut deep enough to go through all of the pages. Once you make a mark with the knife, it might be easier to remove the ruler to finish the cut.





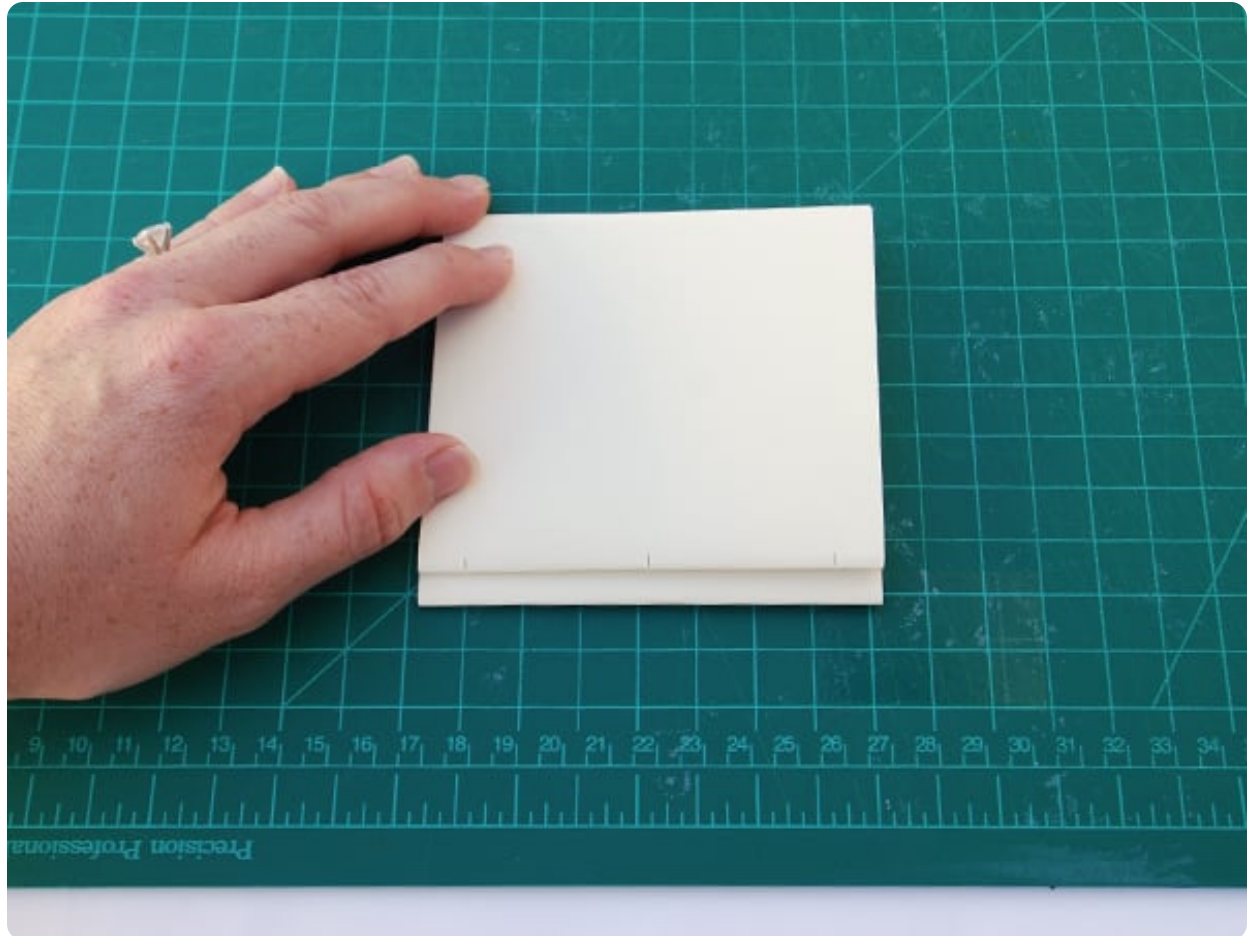
Step 2

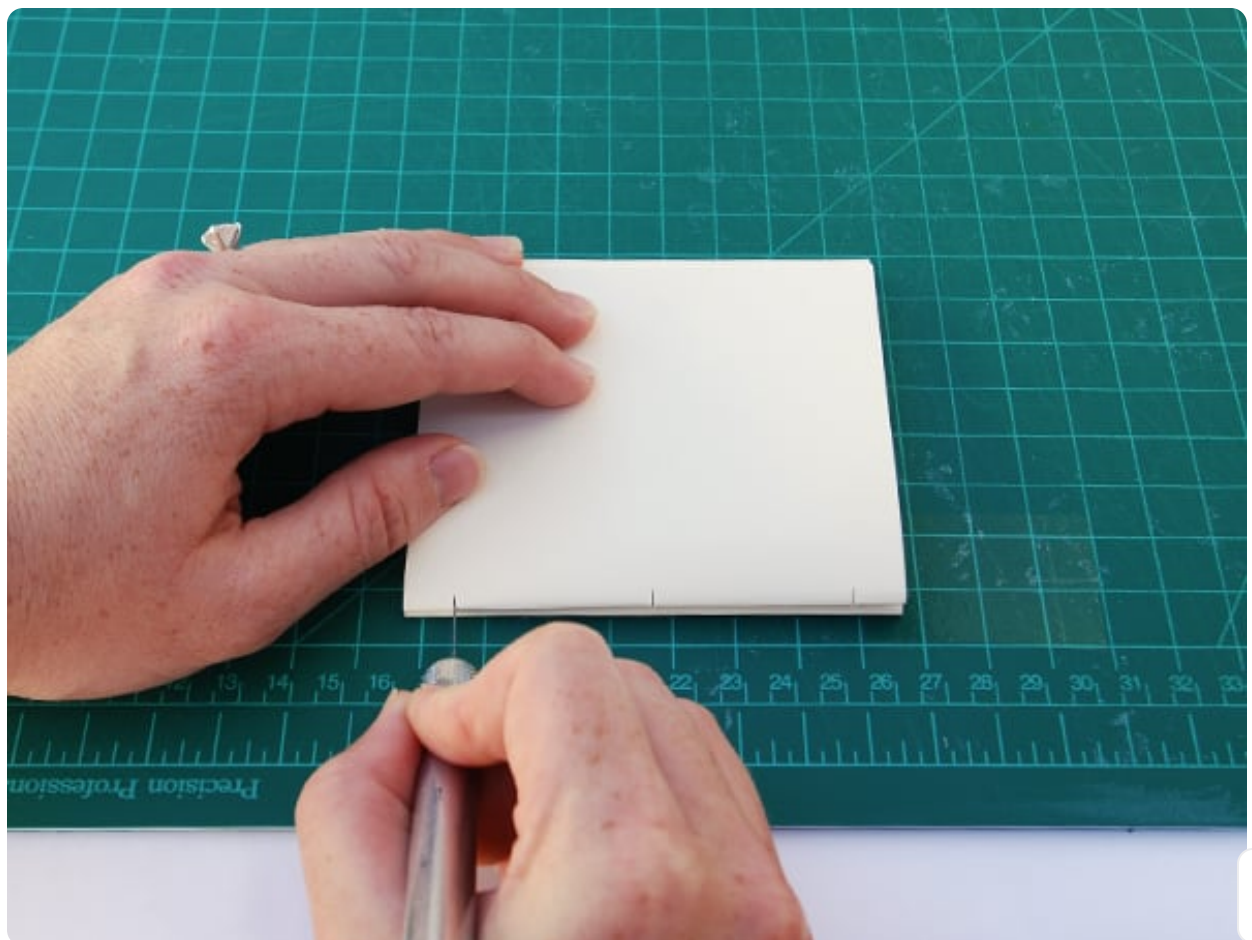
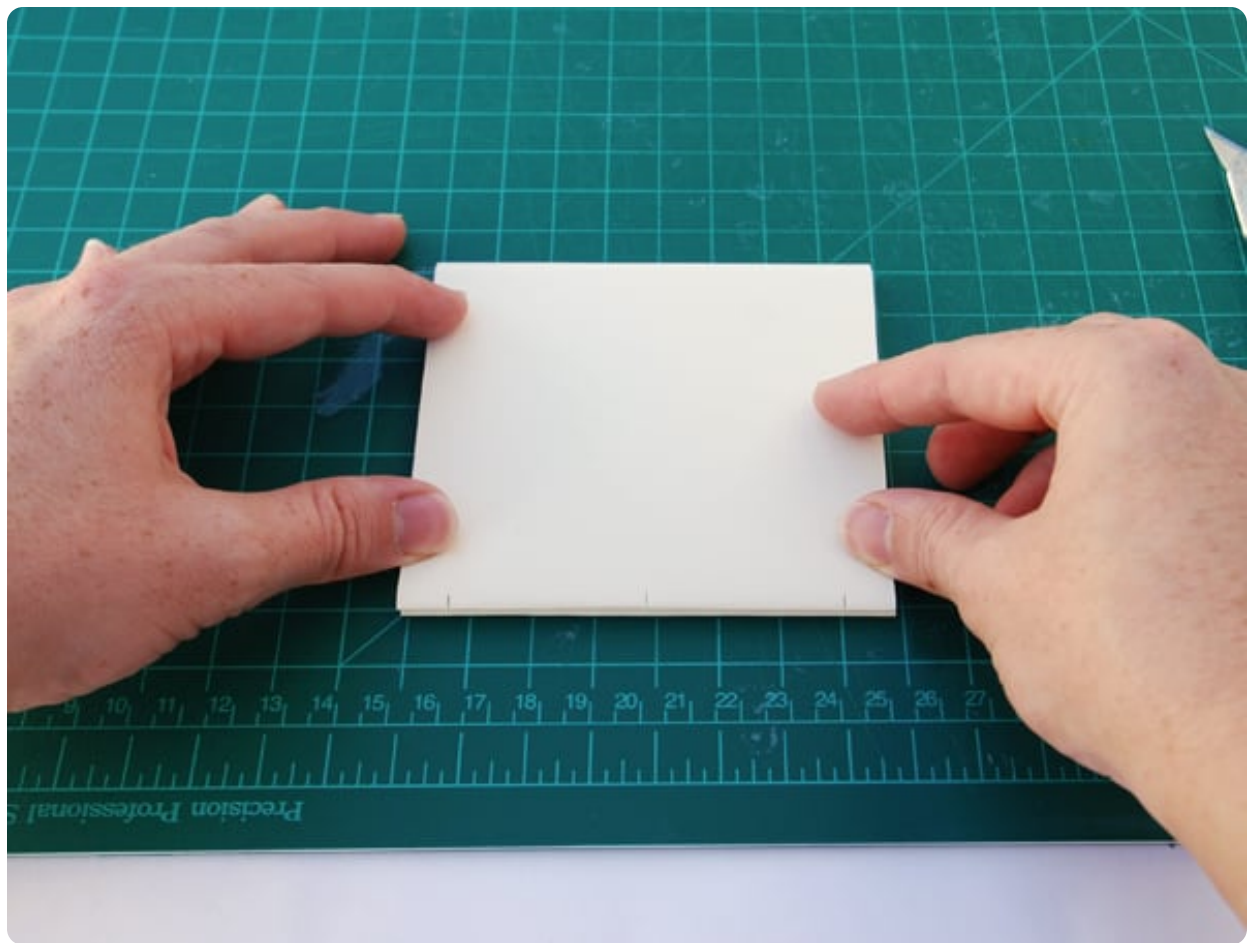
Cut another two notches, measuring 1cm (approx 1/2in) away from each edge.

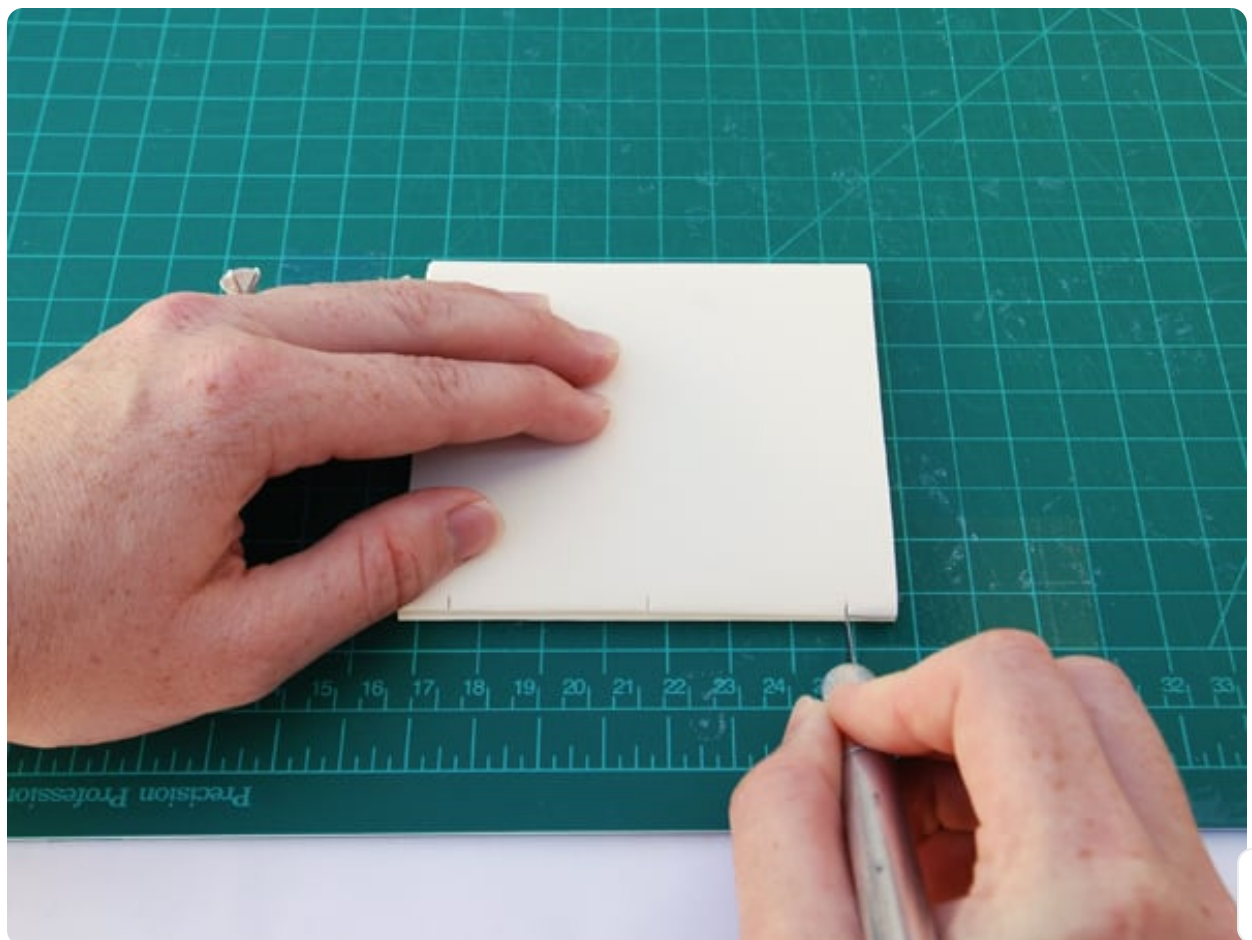
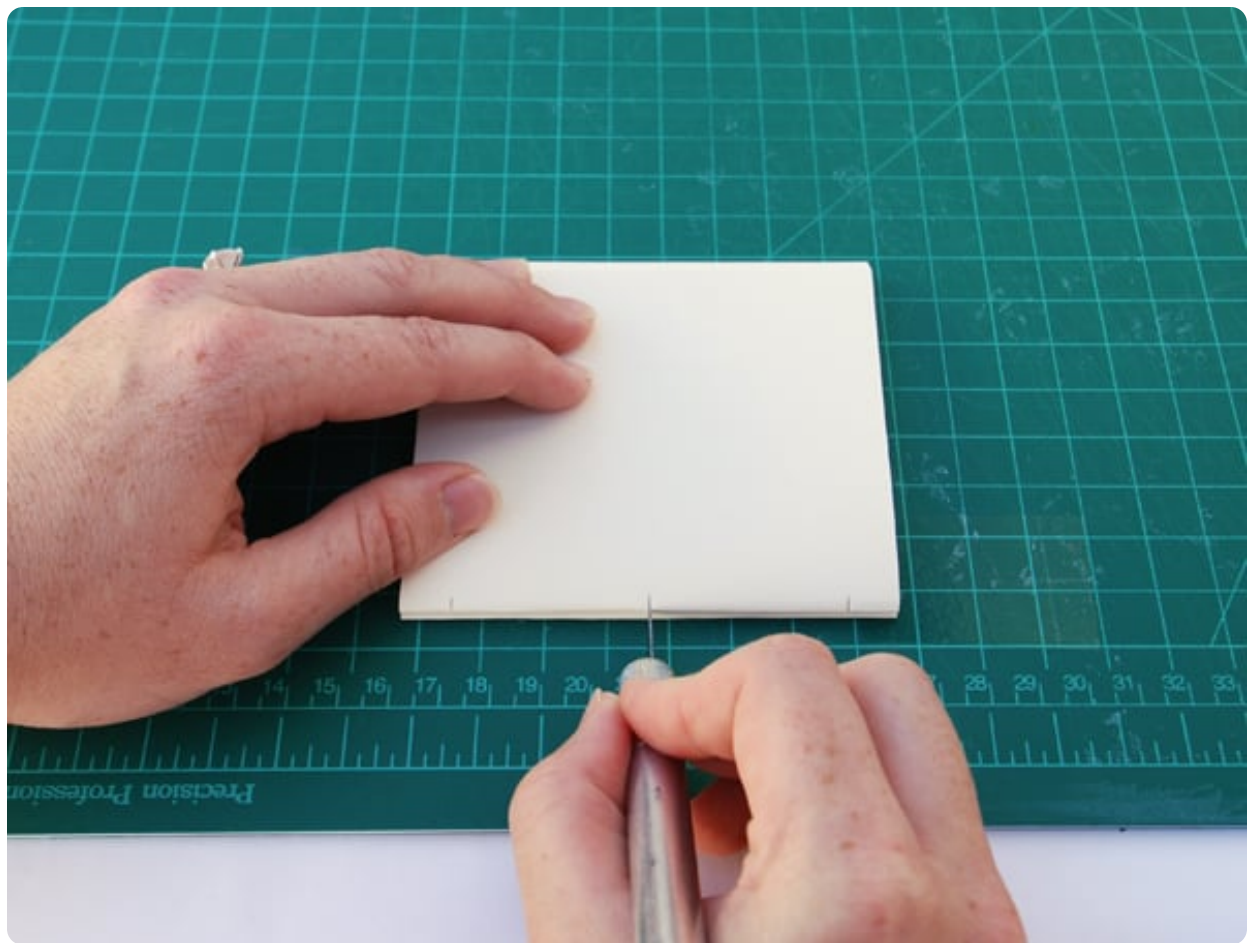


Step 3

Use the signature you cut in Step 2 as a guide for the rest. Place it directly on top of an unmarked signature. Cut straight through the notches of your guide and into the signature underneath.

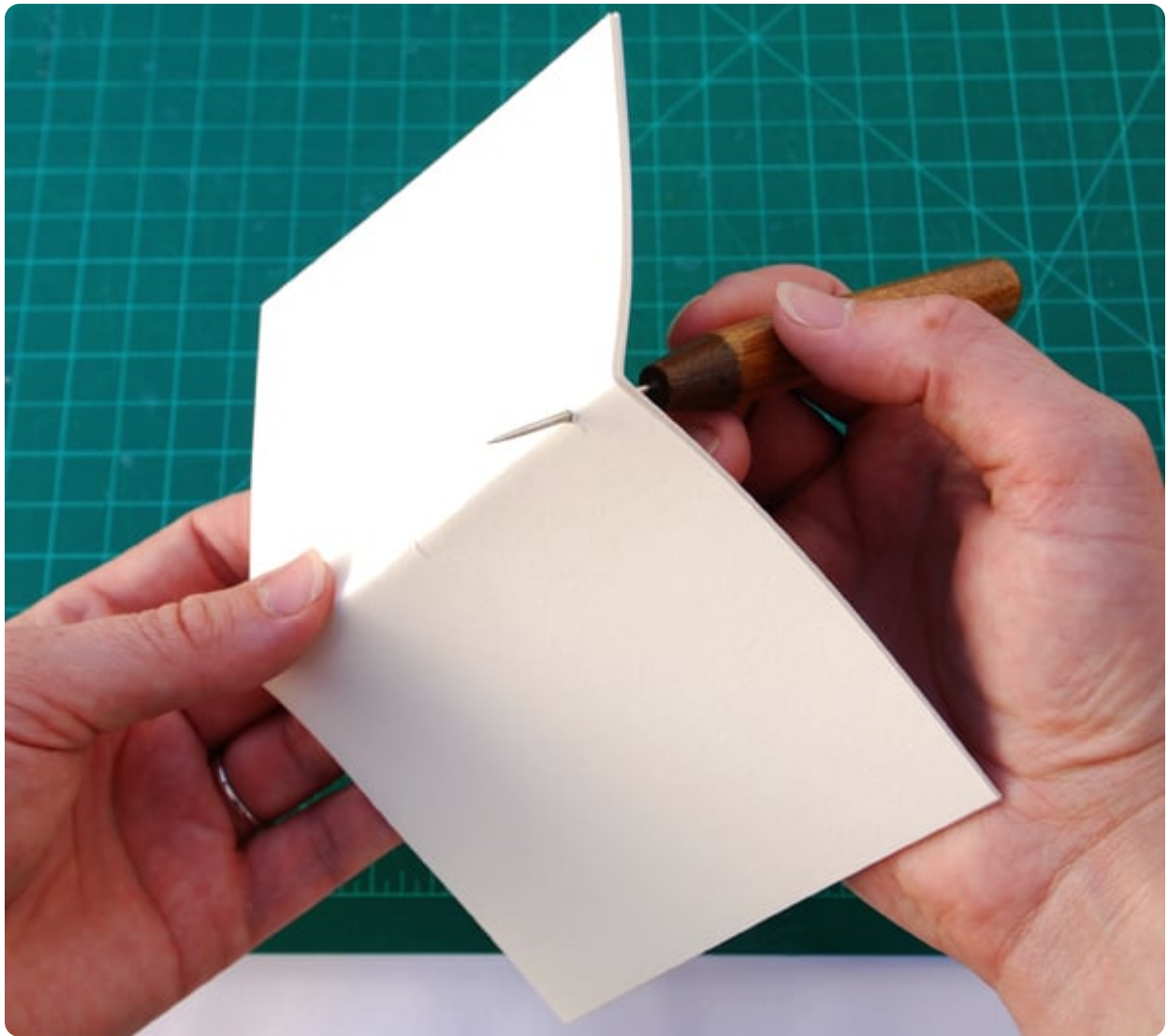


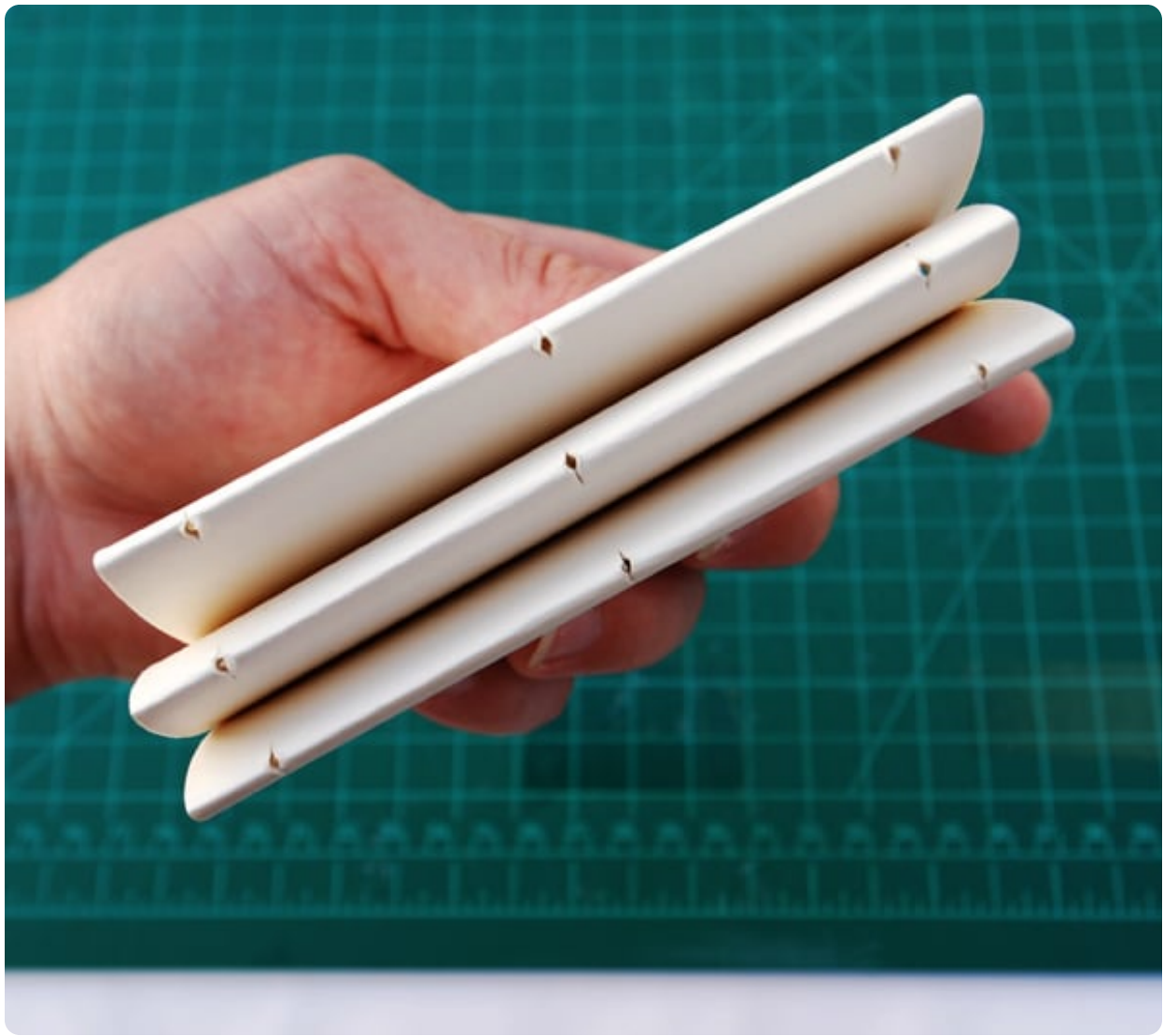




Step 4

To give your needle and thread a smooth ride when stitching, push the awl through all of the notches.



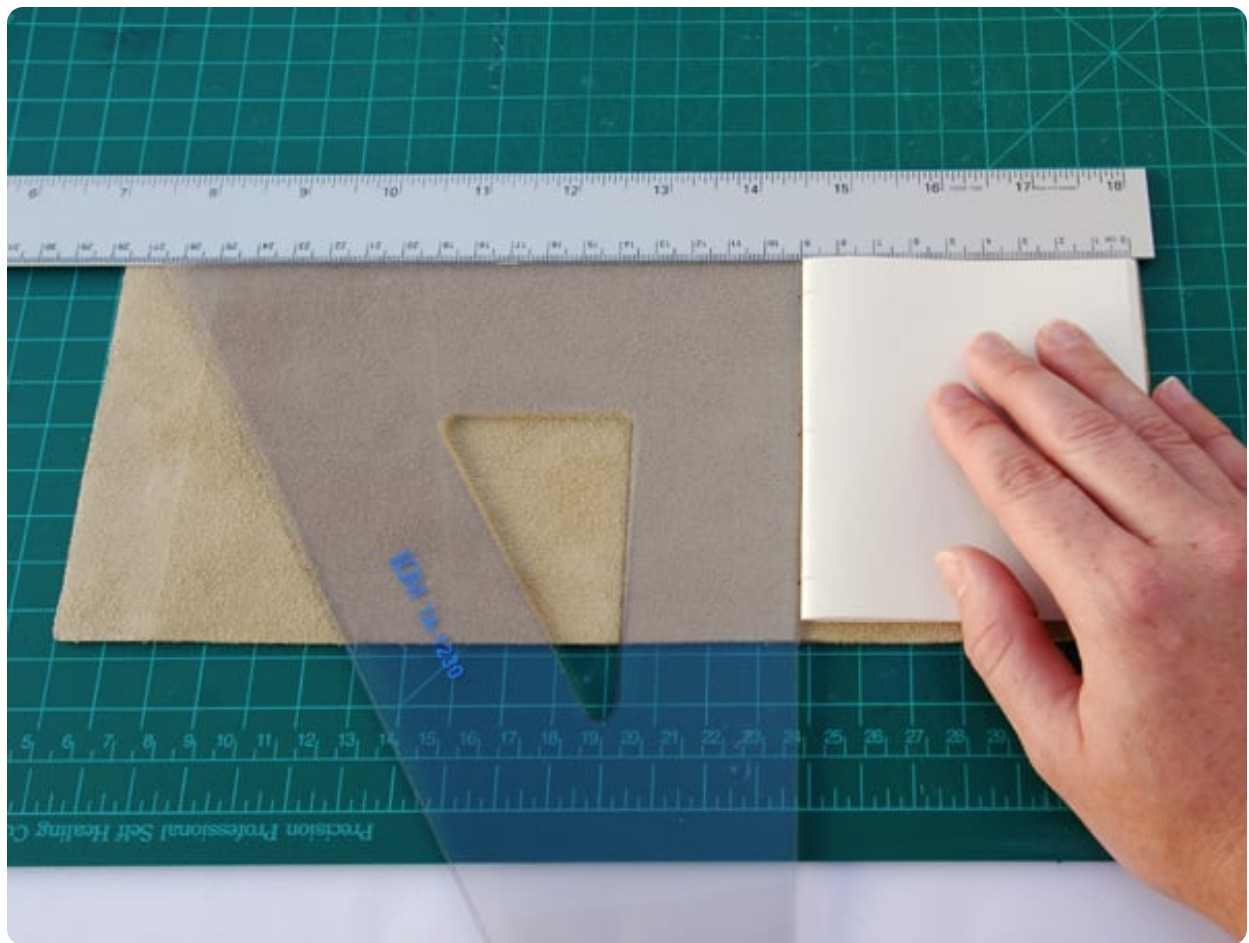


5. Punch the Cover

Step 1

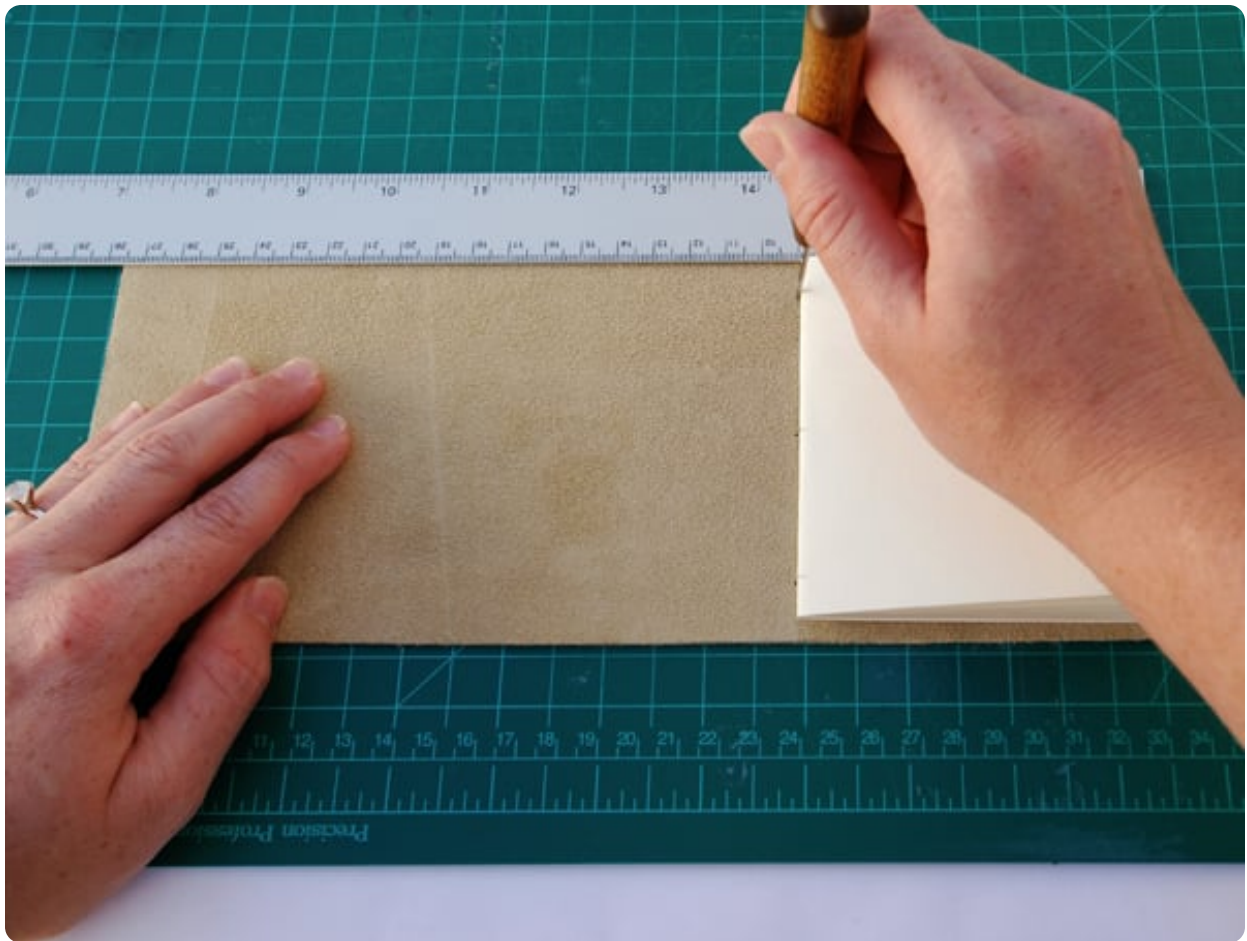
Place one signature inside the leather cover. Center it so that there is equal space on the top and bottom. Allow at least 1mm (approx 2/16in) of the cover to stick out on the right side. Leather isn't always cut straight, so you can use your ruler and triangle to make sure the signature is centered as best as you can.





Step 2

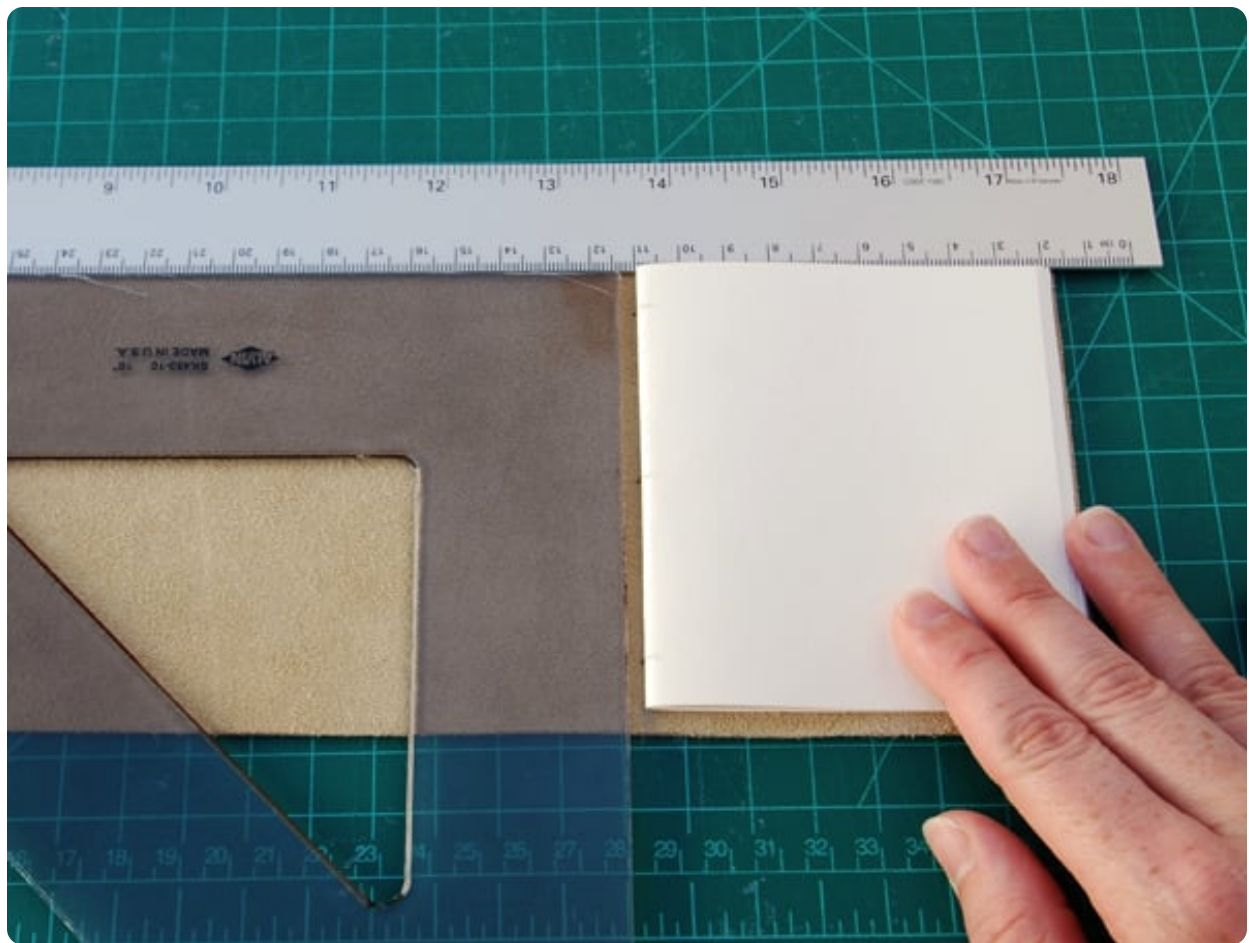
Keeping the ruler at the top, punch a hole into the leather next to each of the three holes in your signature.



Step 3

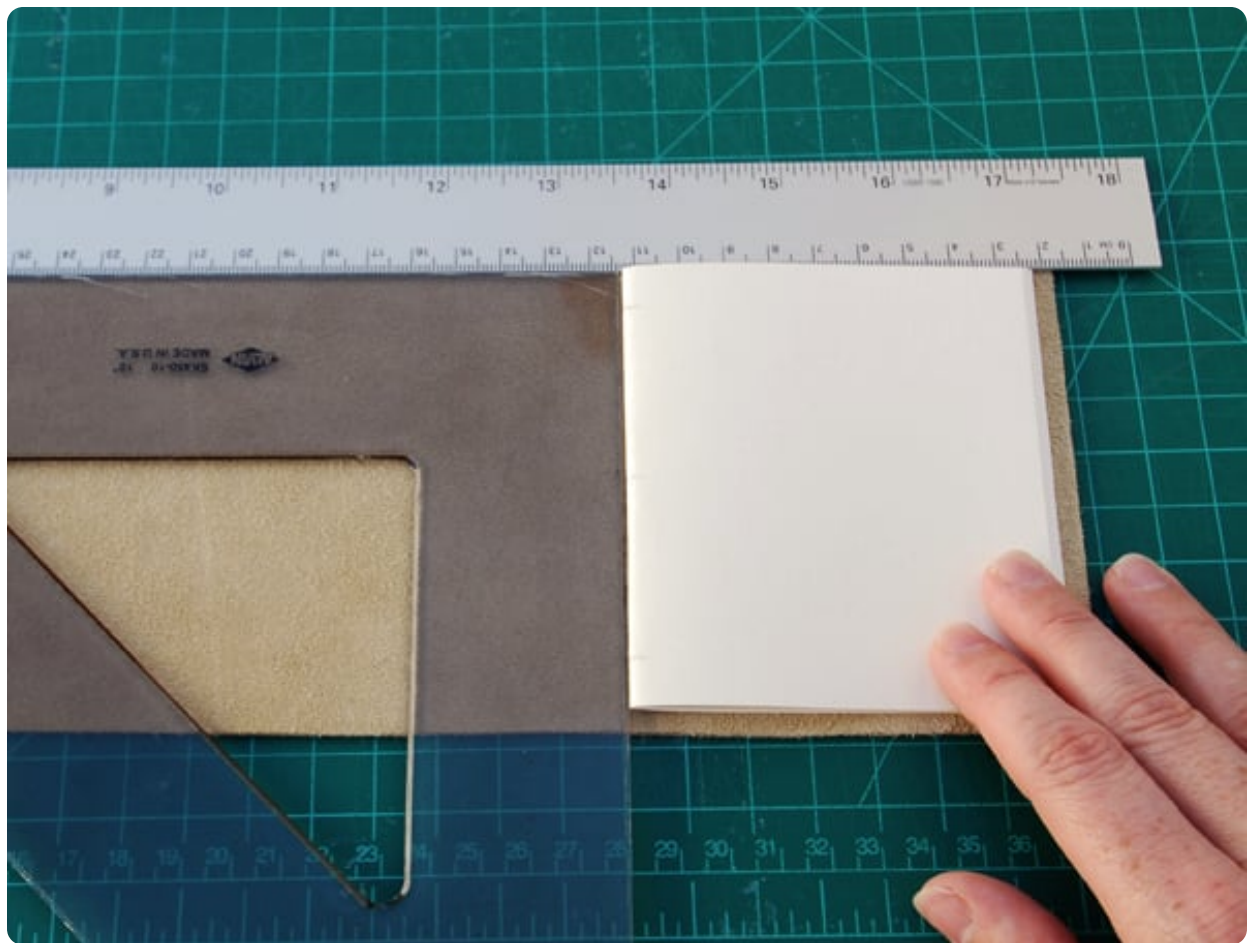
Next, make a second row of holes in your cover. Place the triangle against the ruler and 4mm (approx 1/8in) away from the signature.



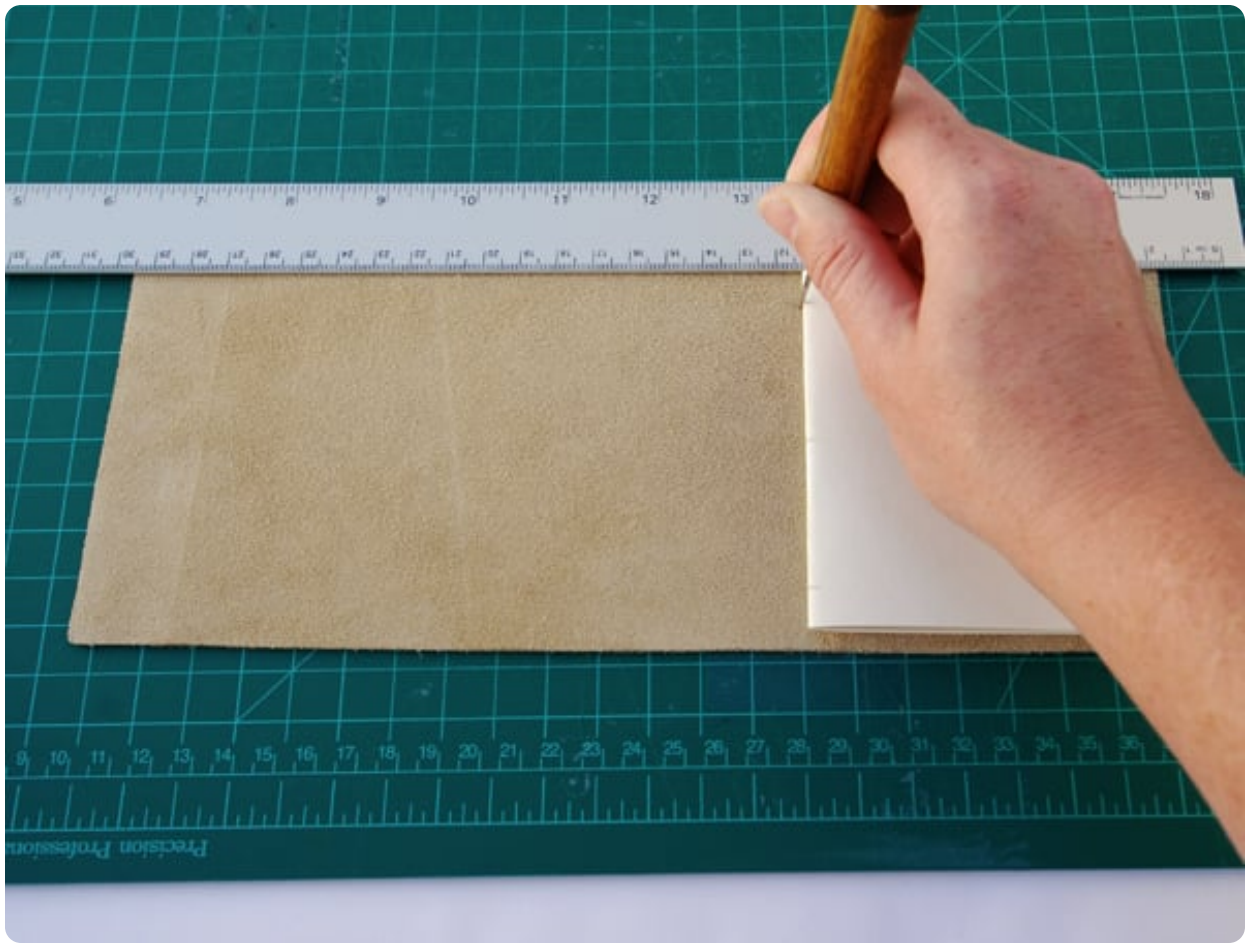


Move the signature right next to the triangle.

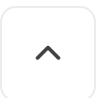


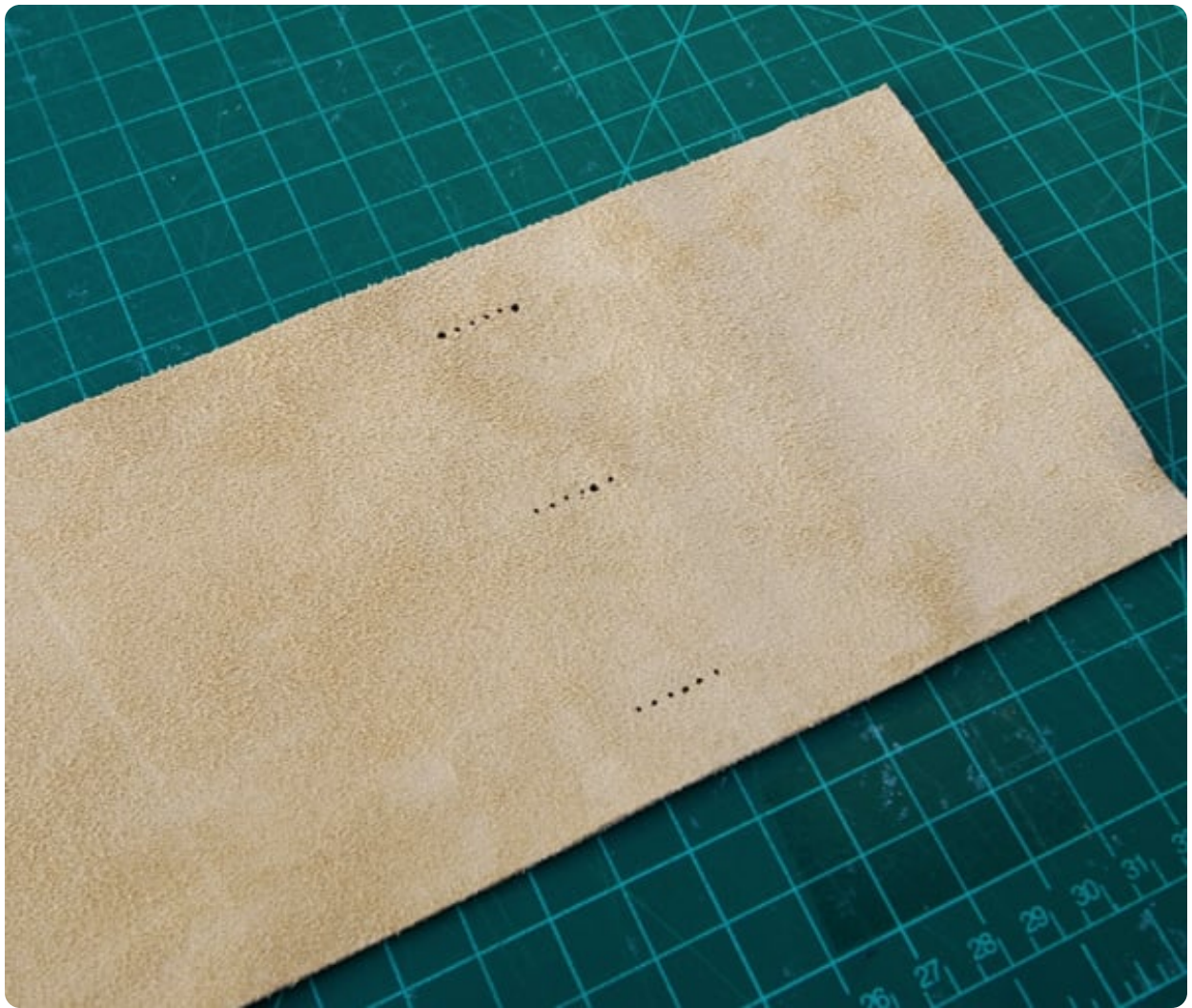


Remove the triangle and punch a hole next to each notch in your signature. This method will help keep each row of holes lined up properly.



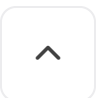
Repeat this step until you have six rows of holes in your cover.

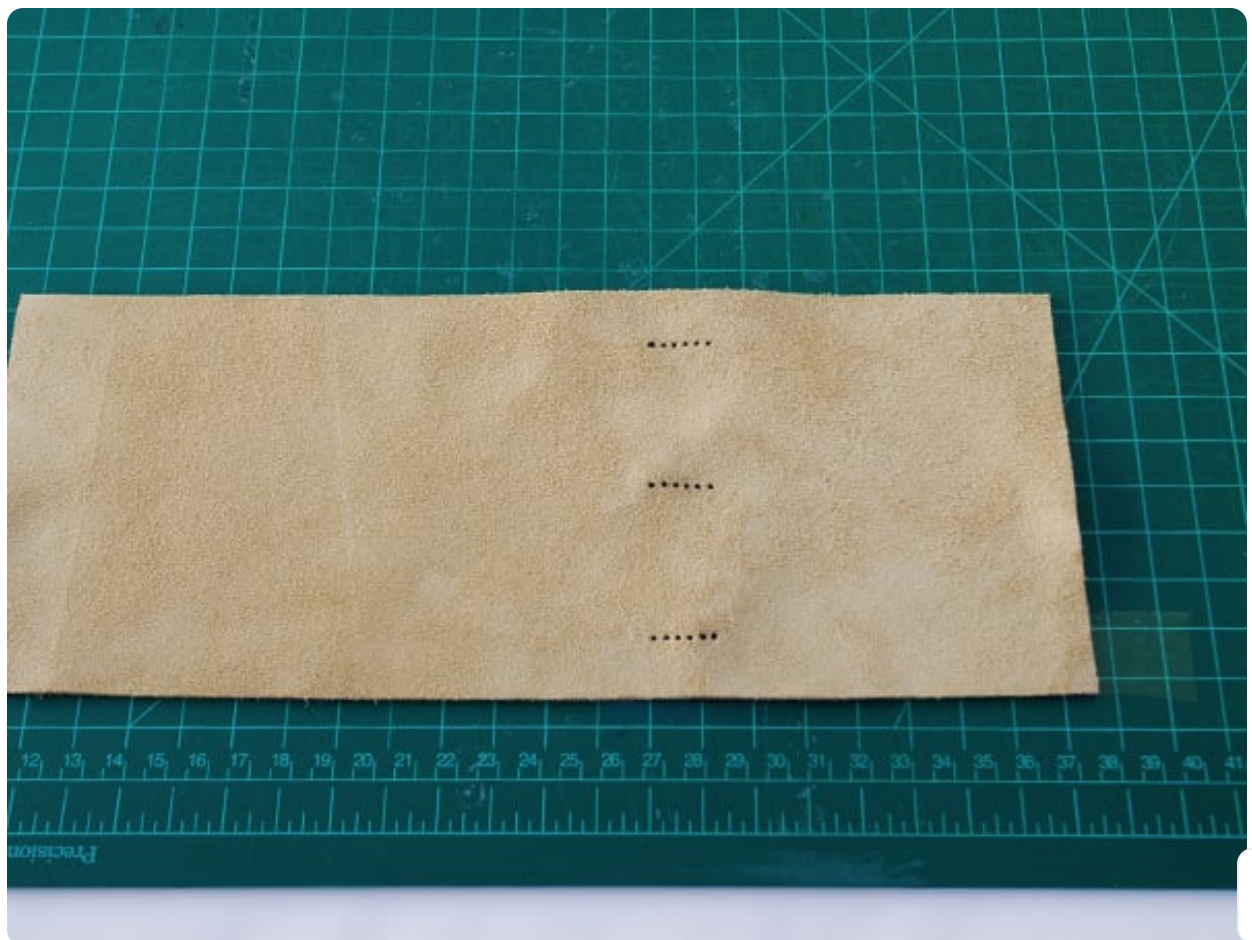
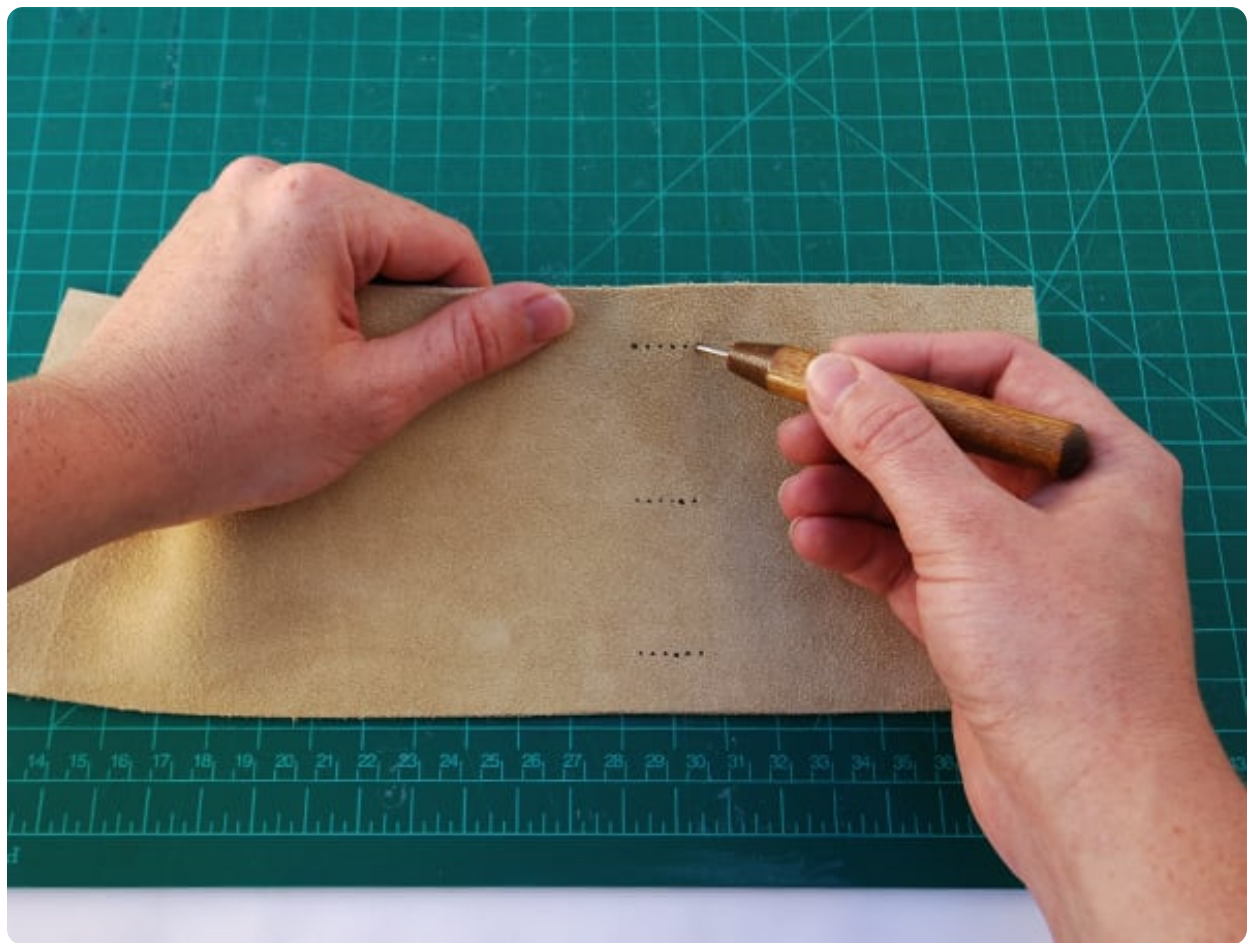




Step 4

Widen the holes in the cover with your awl.





6. Bind Your Book

Step 1

Time to start stitching! Place your cover with the inside facing out and the long side facing towards you.



Step 2

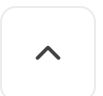
Start binding by stitching the first signature to the top row of holes in the cover (the furthest row away from you). Cut an arm's length of thread and stitch

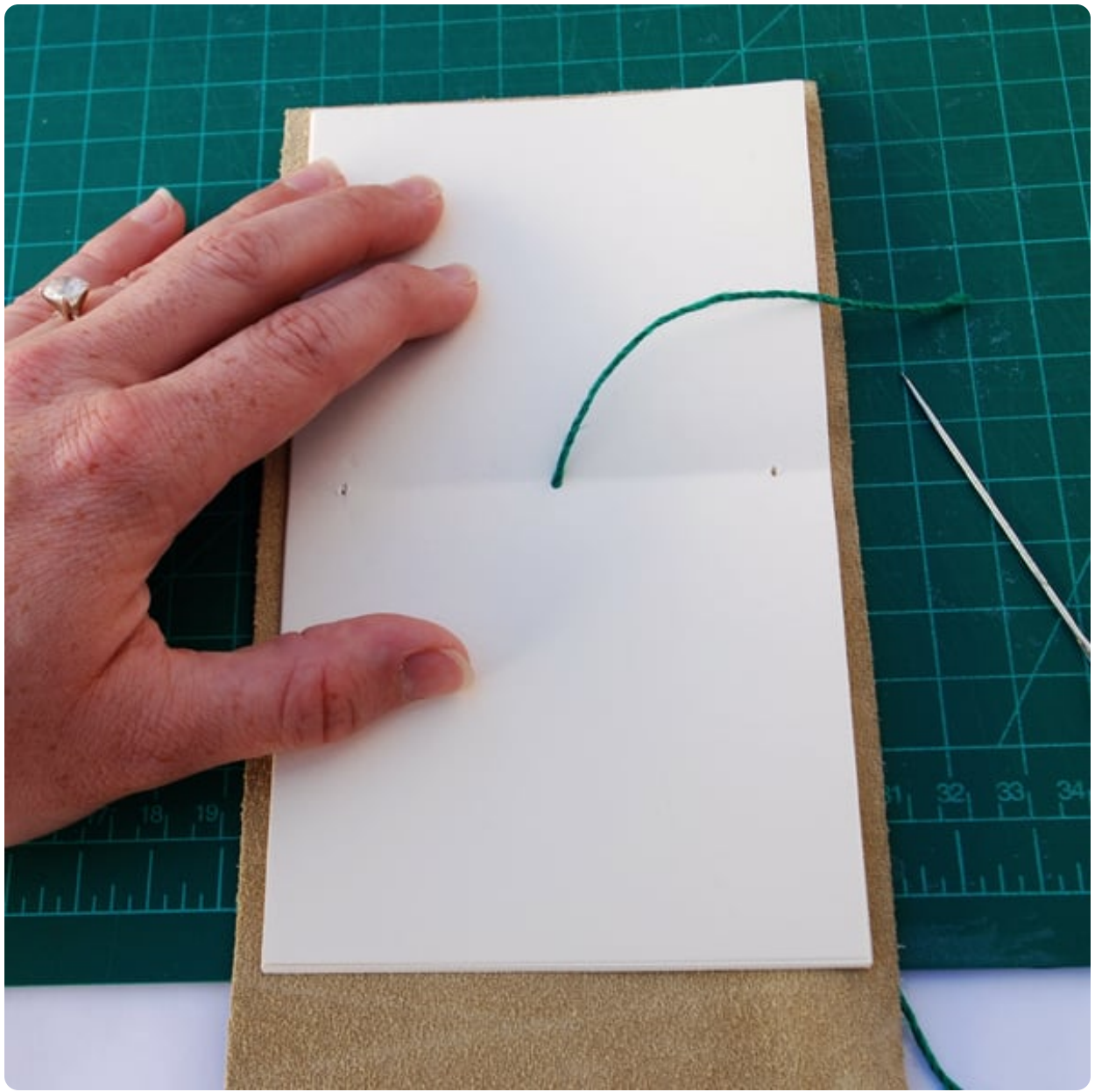


through the middle hole (hole no. 2) of the signature from the inside out.
Continue this stitch through the middle hole of the cover.



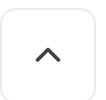
Leave a small length of thread on the inside of the signature. You will make a knot with this later.

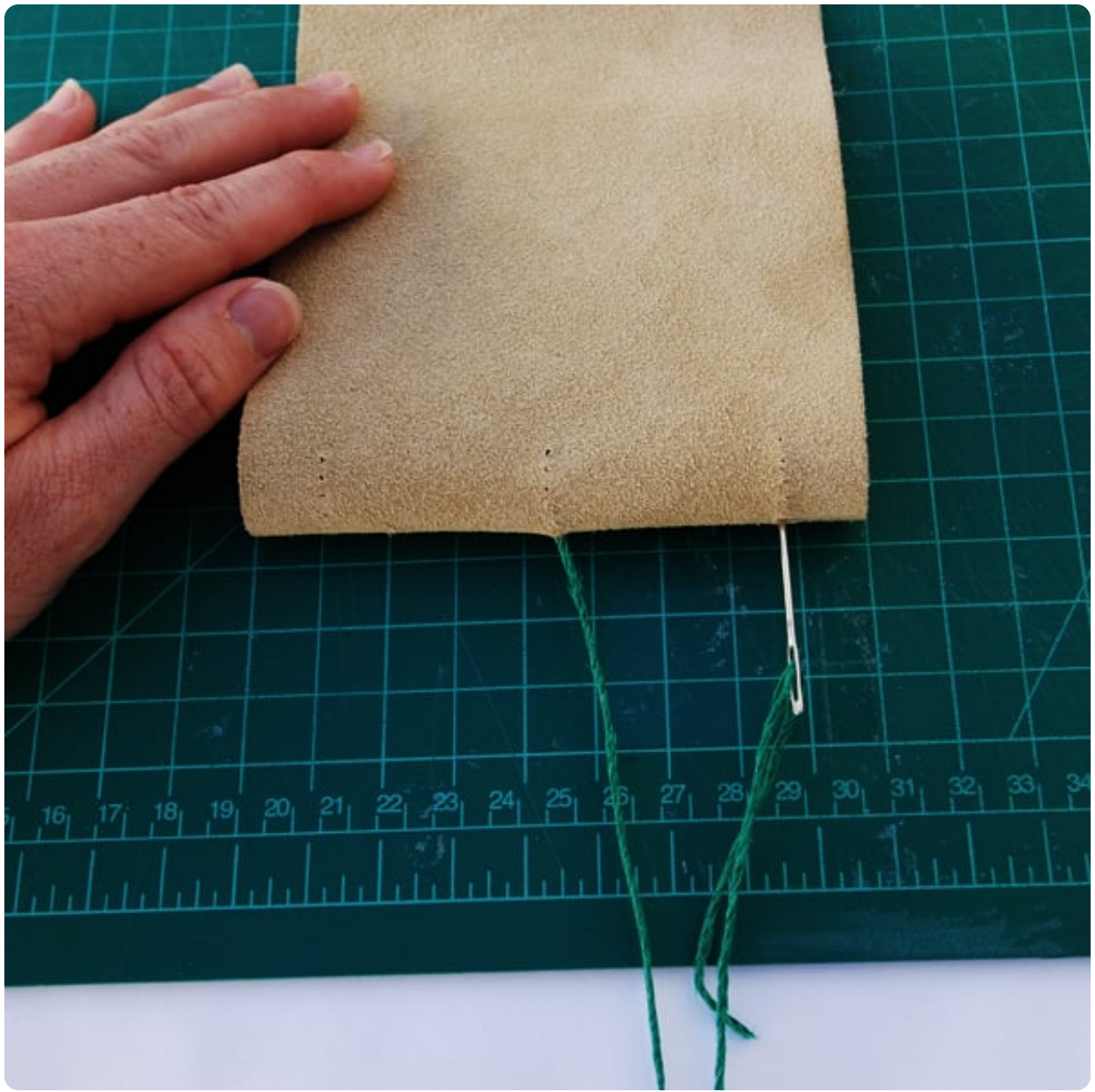




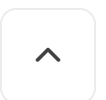
Step 3

Sew in through the right hole (hole no.3).





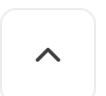
Pull each stitch tight.

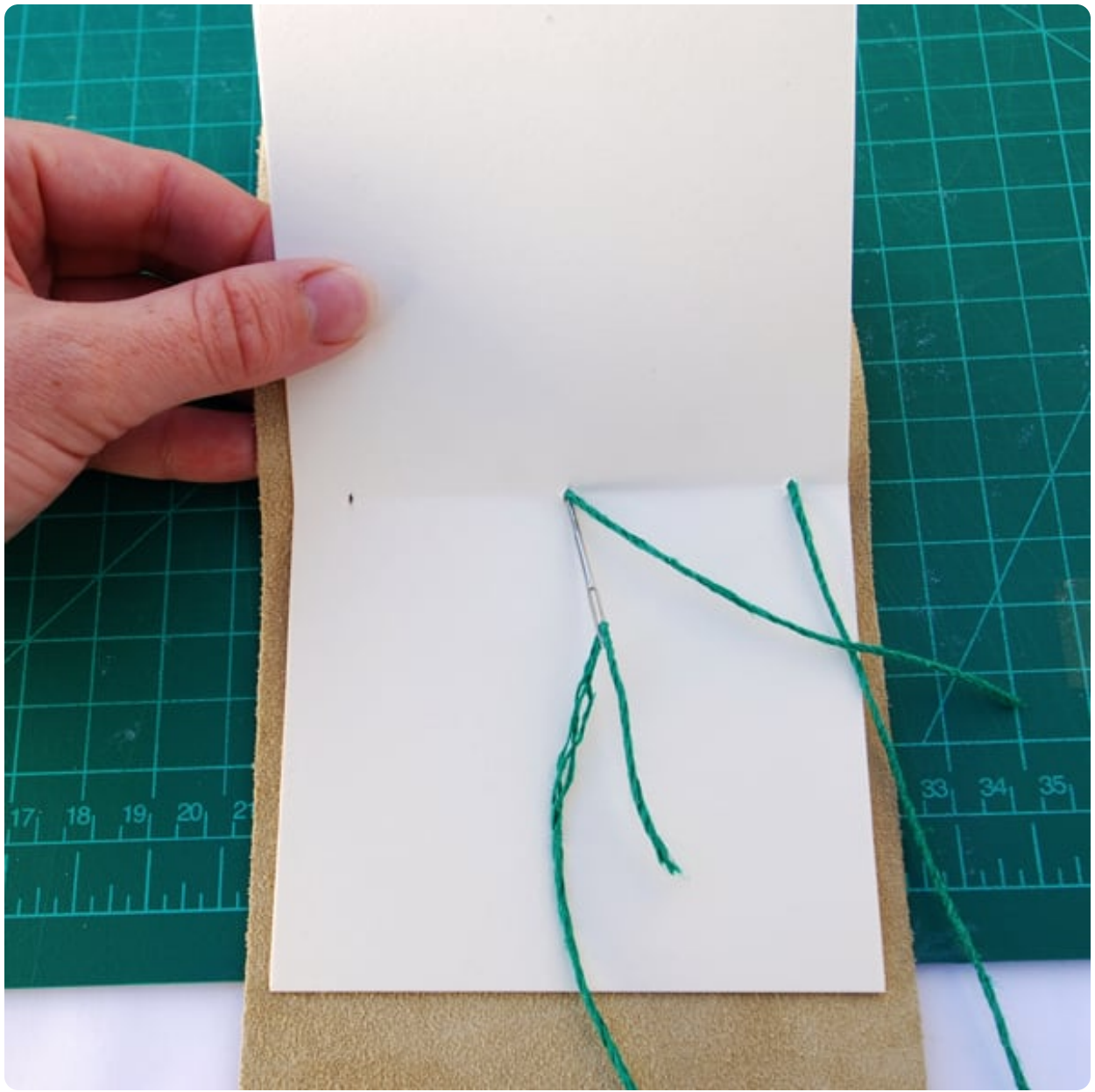




Step 4

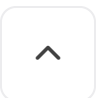
Then sew out through hole no.2 a second time.

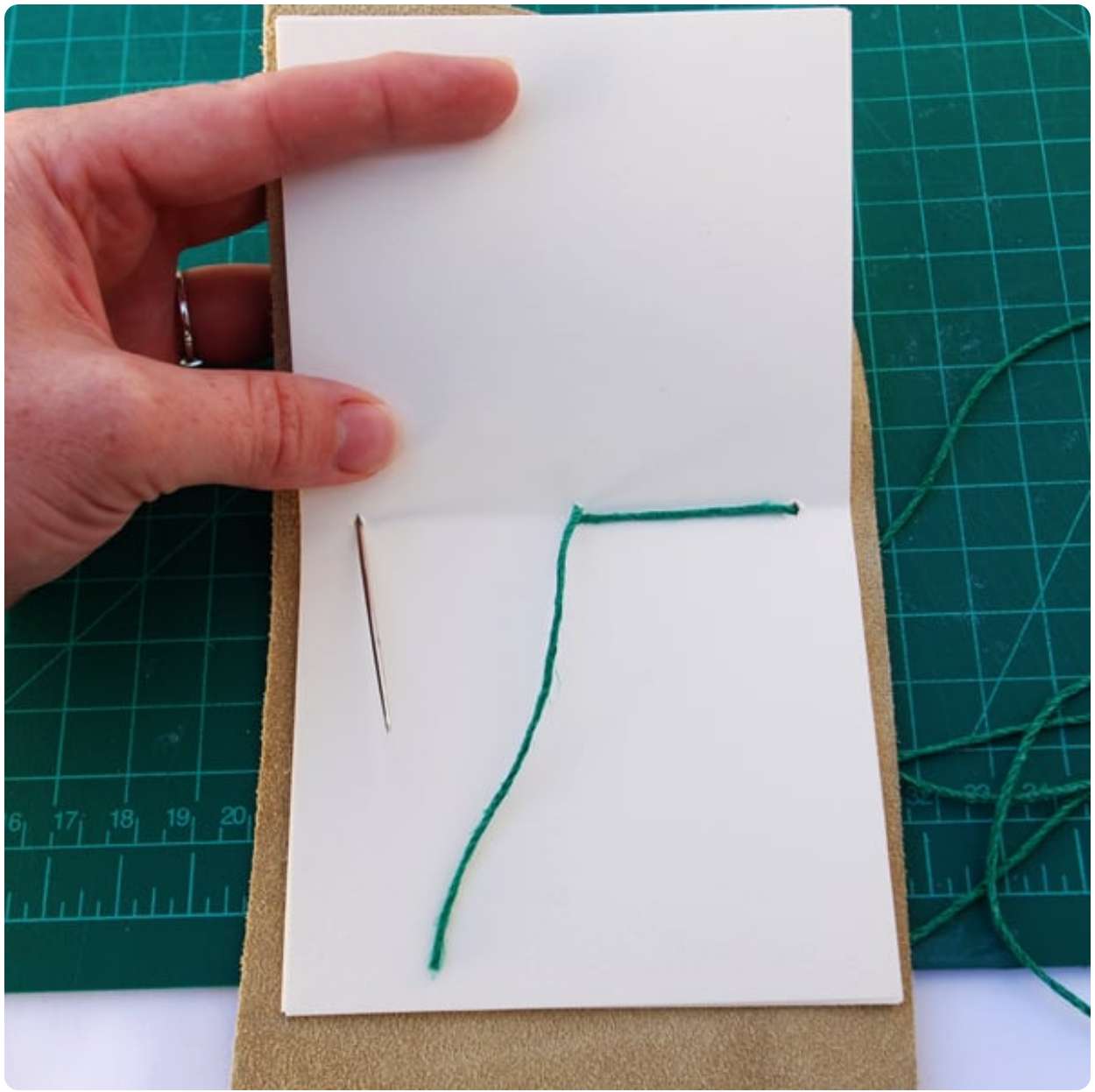




Step 5

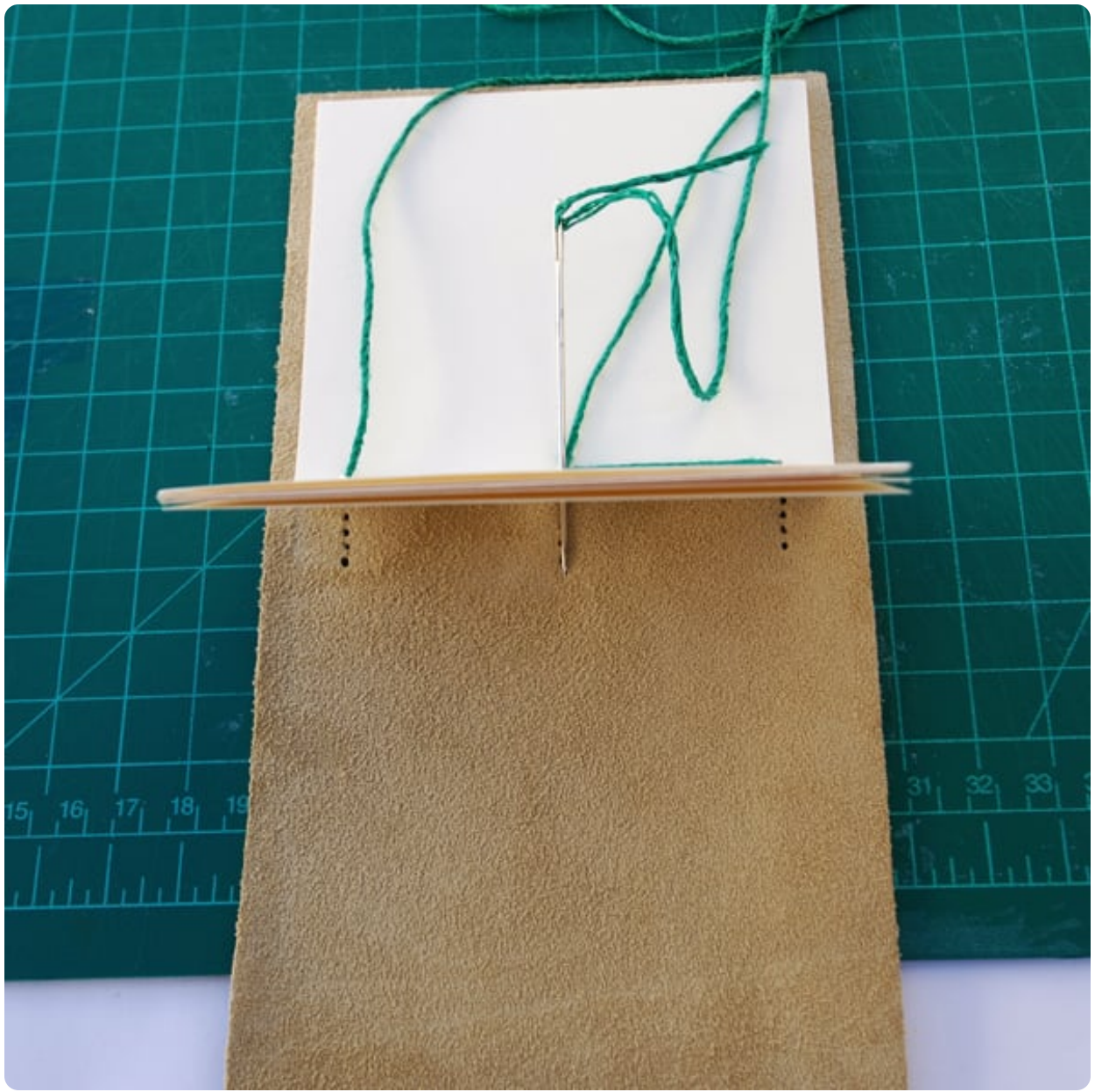
Stitch in through hole no.1.





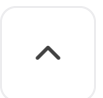
Step 6

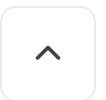
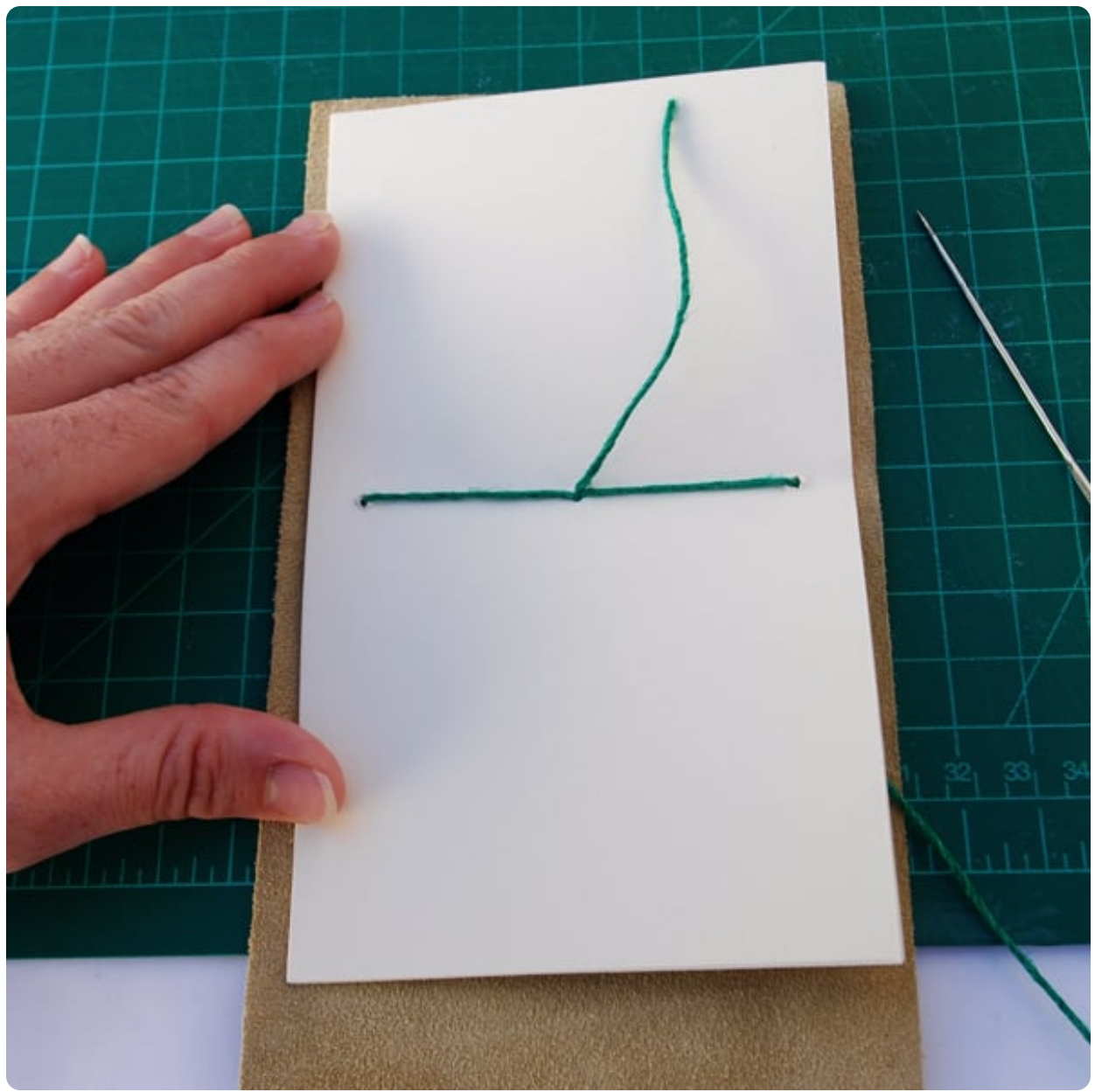
To finish the first signature, stitch out through hole no.2 for the third time, but don't stitch through the leather. You will want the thread inside the cover when we move onto the next signature.

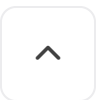
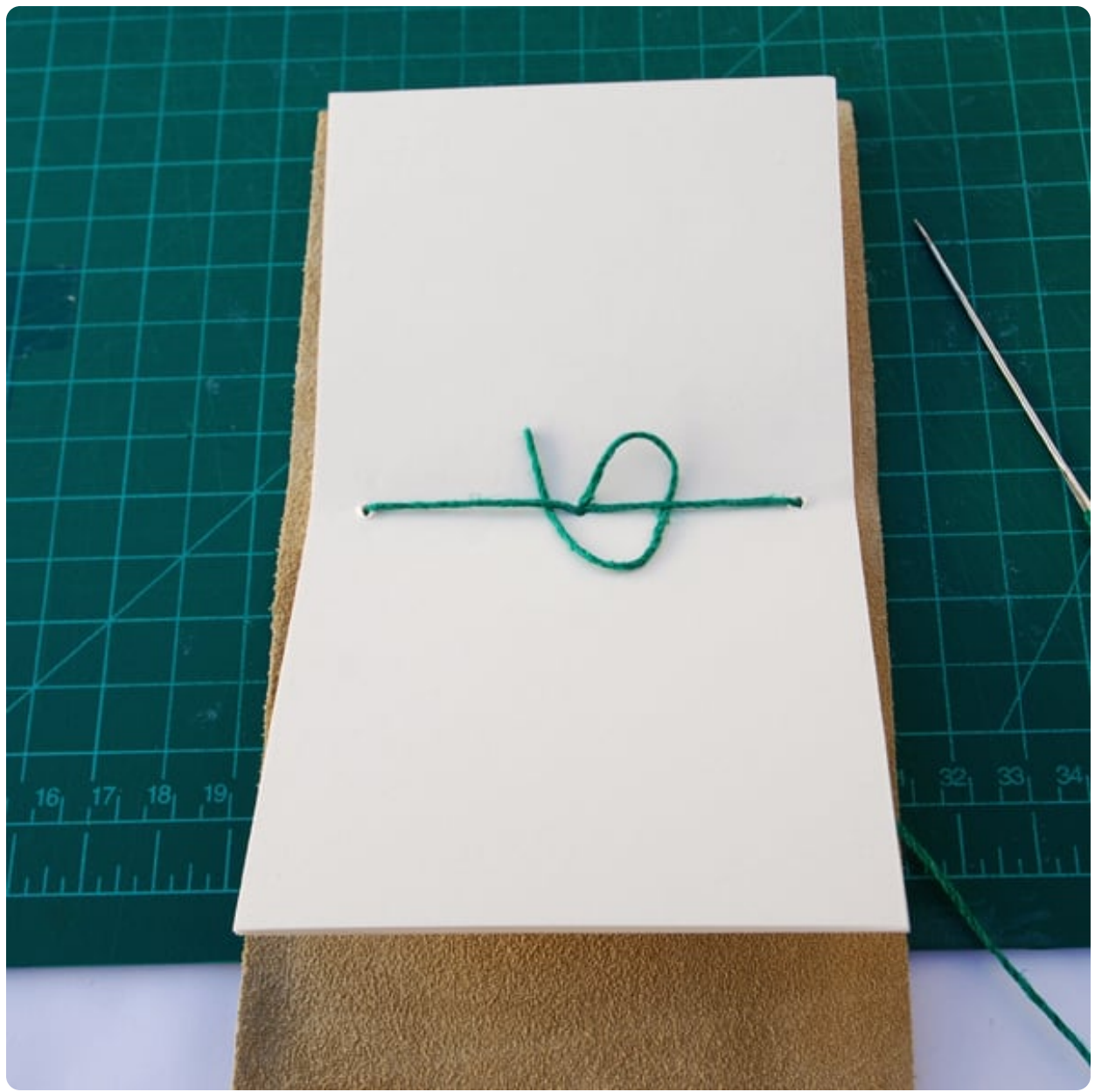


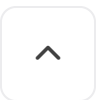
Step 7

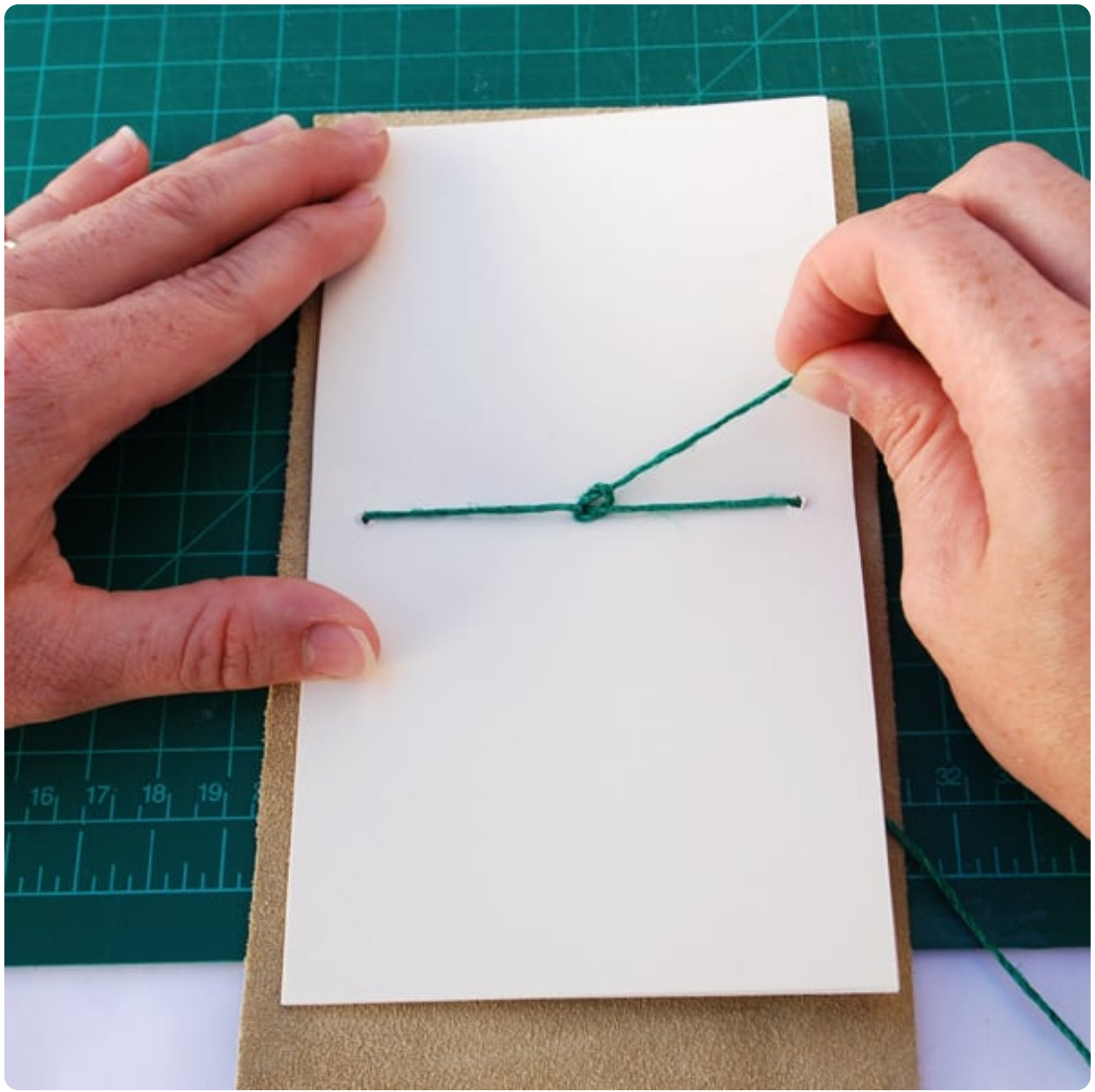
Open the signature and tie a simple knot with the loose tail.





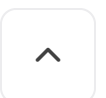


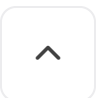
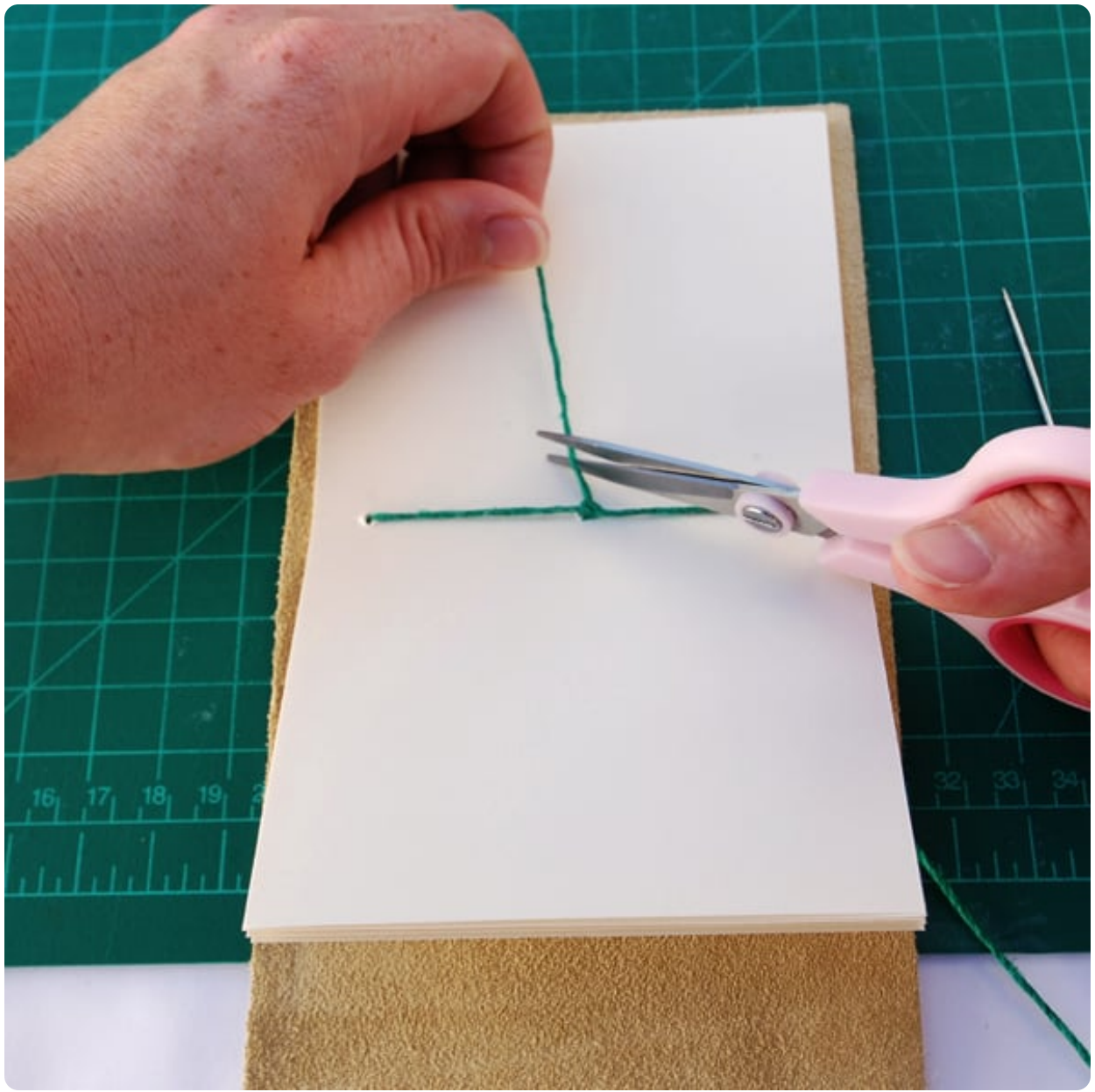


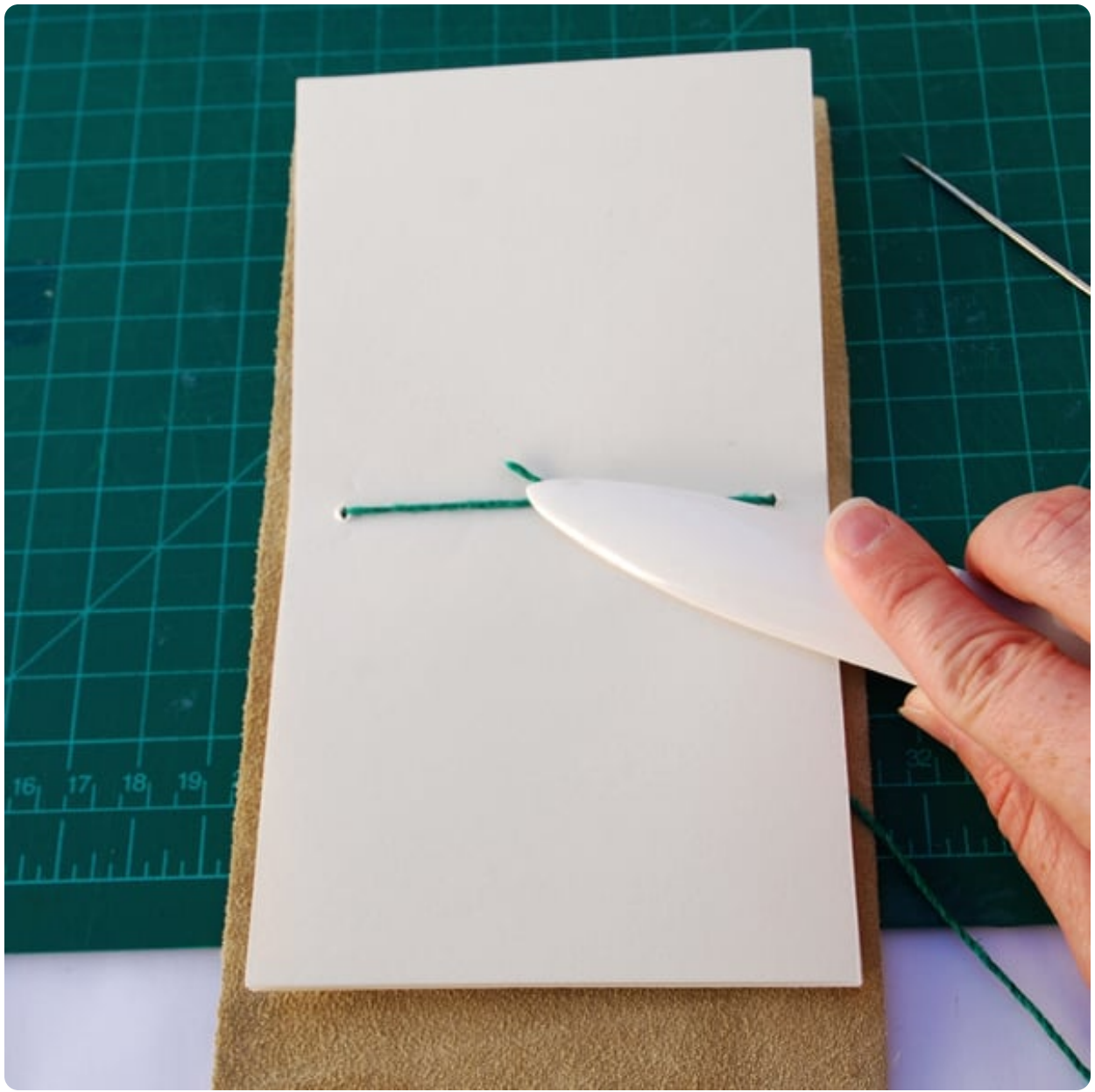


Step 8

Trim the knot and burnish with your bone fold.

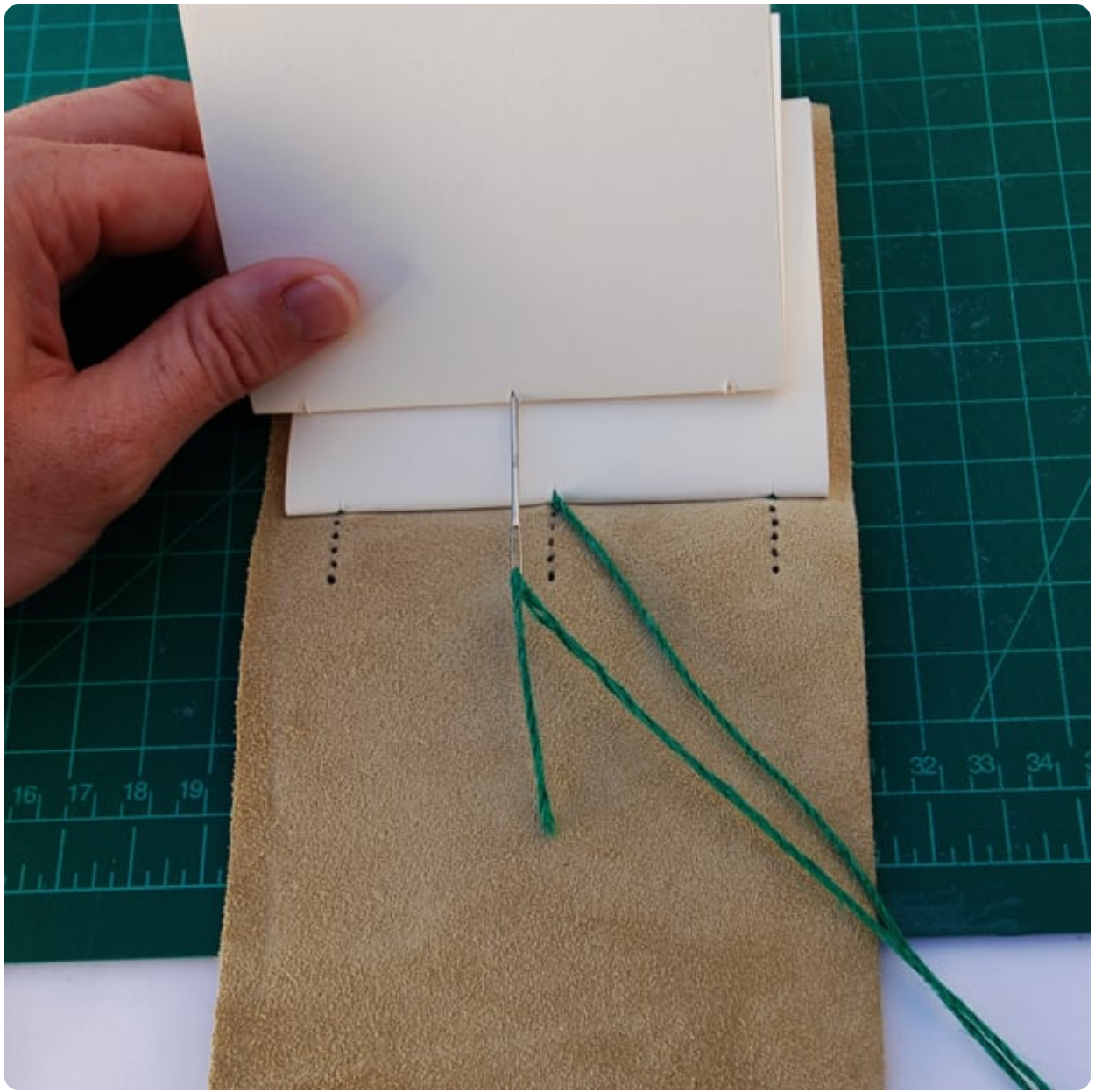






Step 9

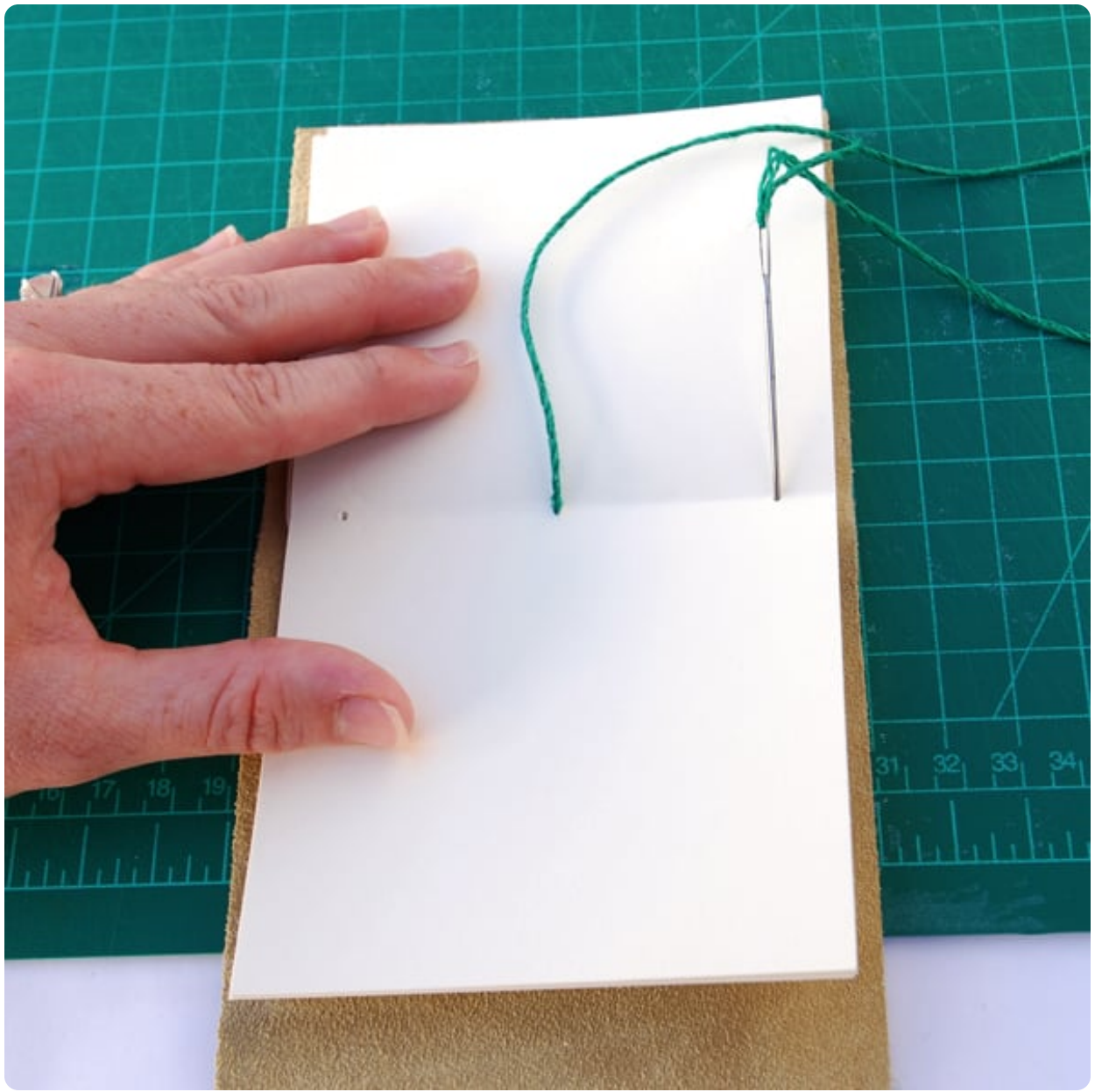
For the next signature, stitch through the same holes, but instead of stitching out, you will be stitching in - and vice versa. Stitch in through hole no.2.



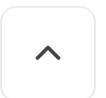
Step 10

Then out through hole no.3.





Make sure you are stitching through the second row of holes in the leather.

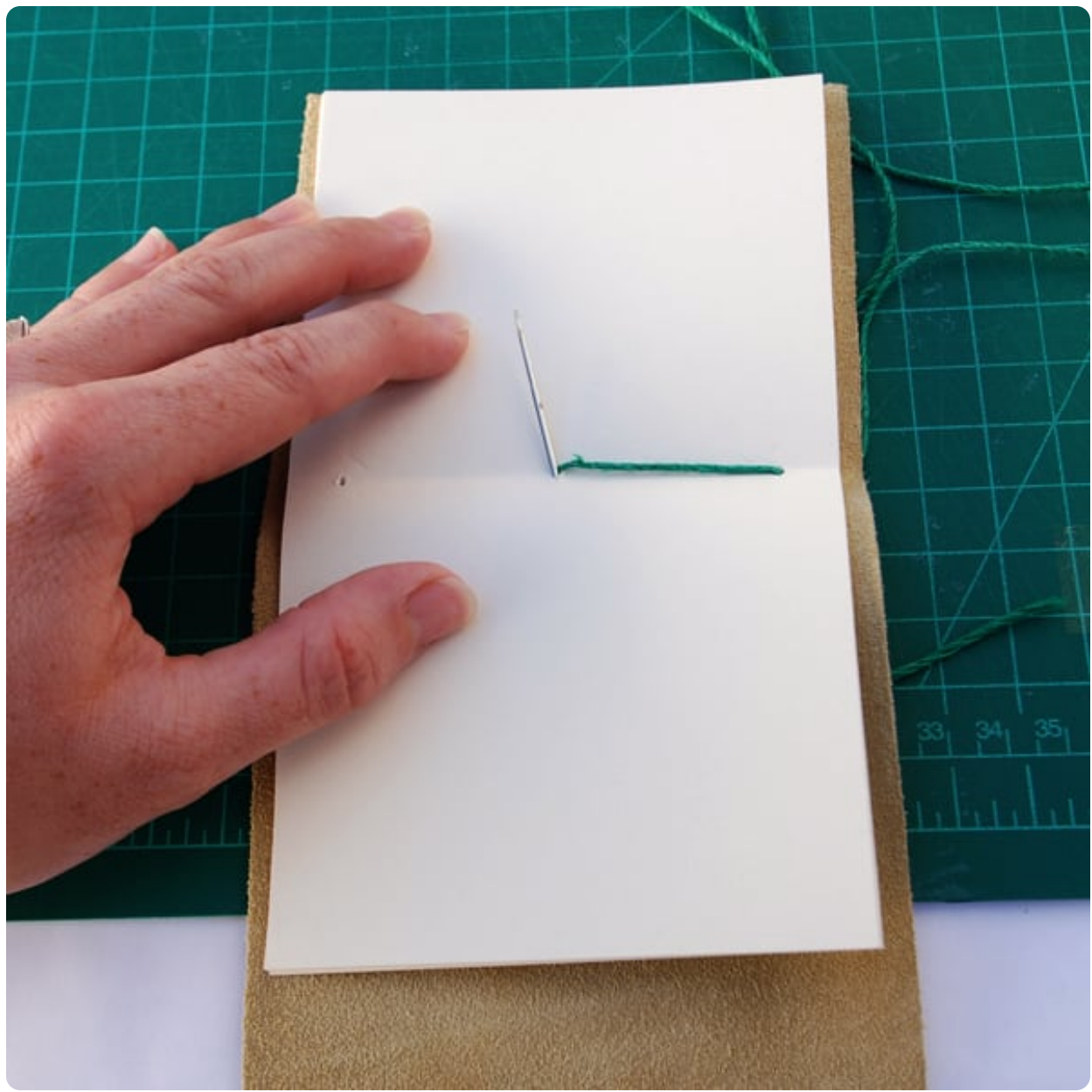


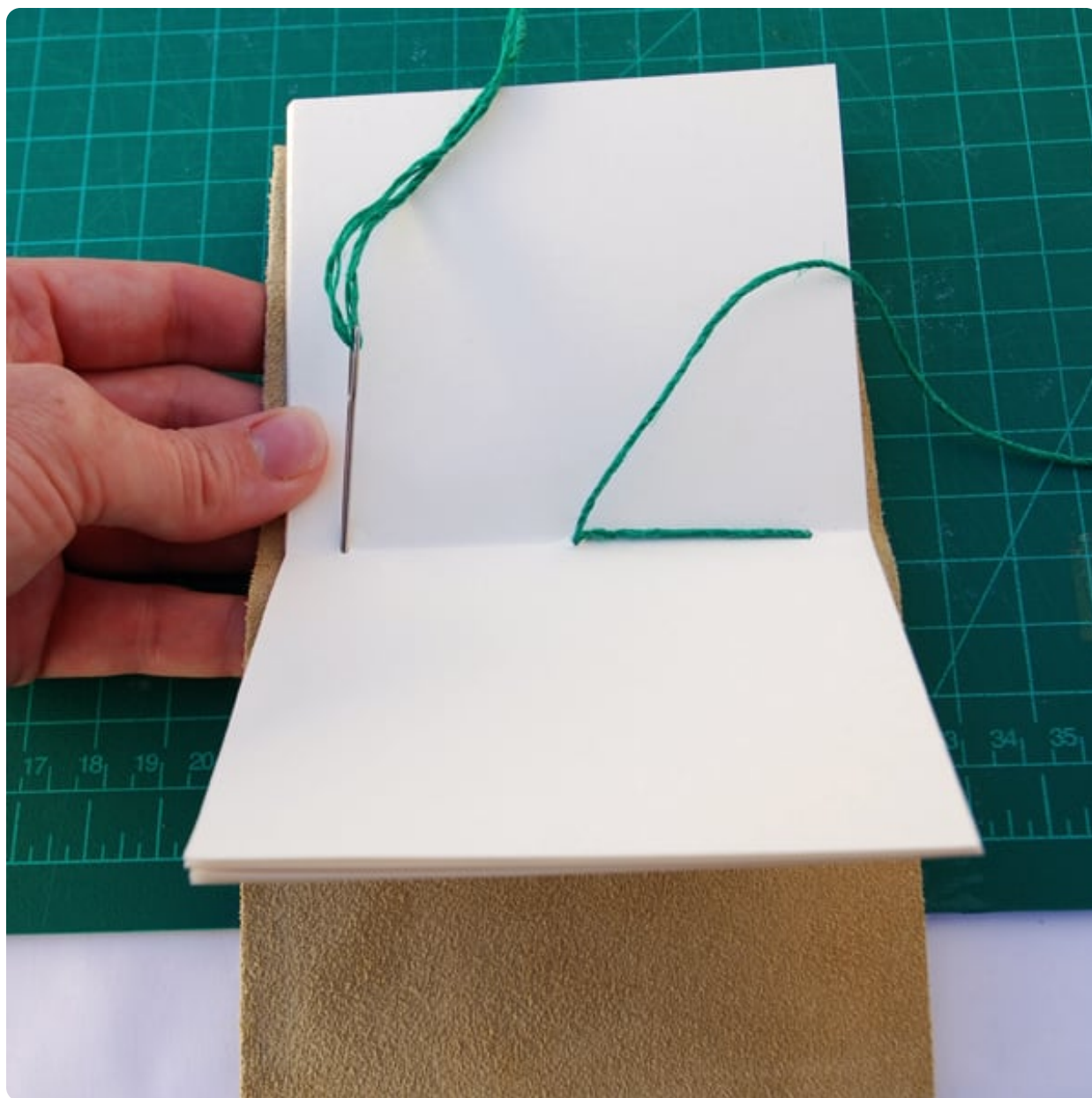


Step 11

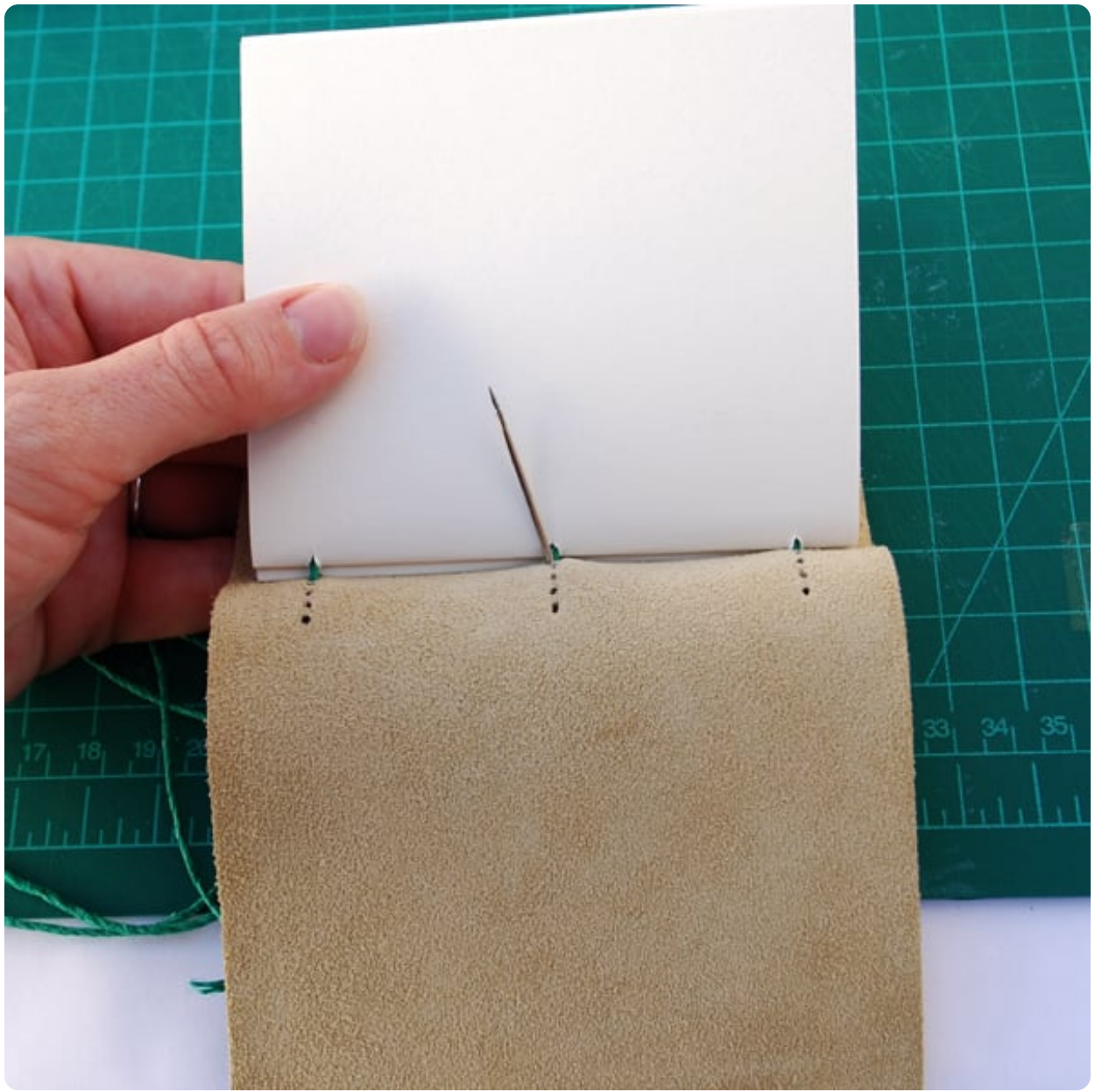
Continue stitching on the second signature, remembering to keep the thread inside the cover when you are finished.





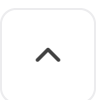
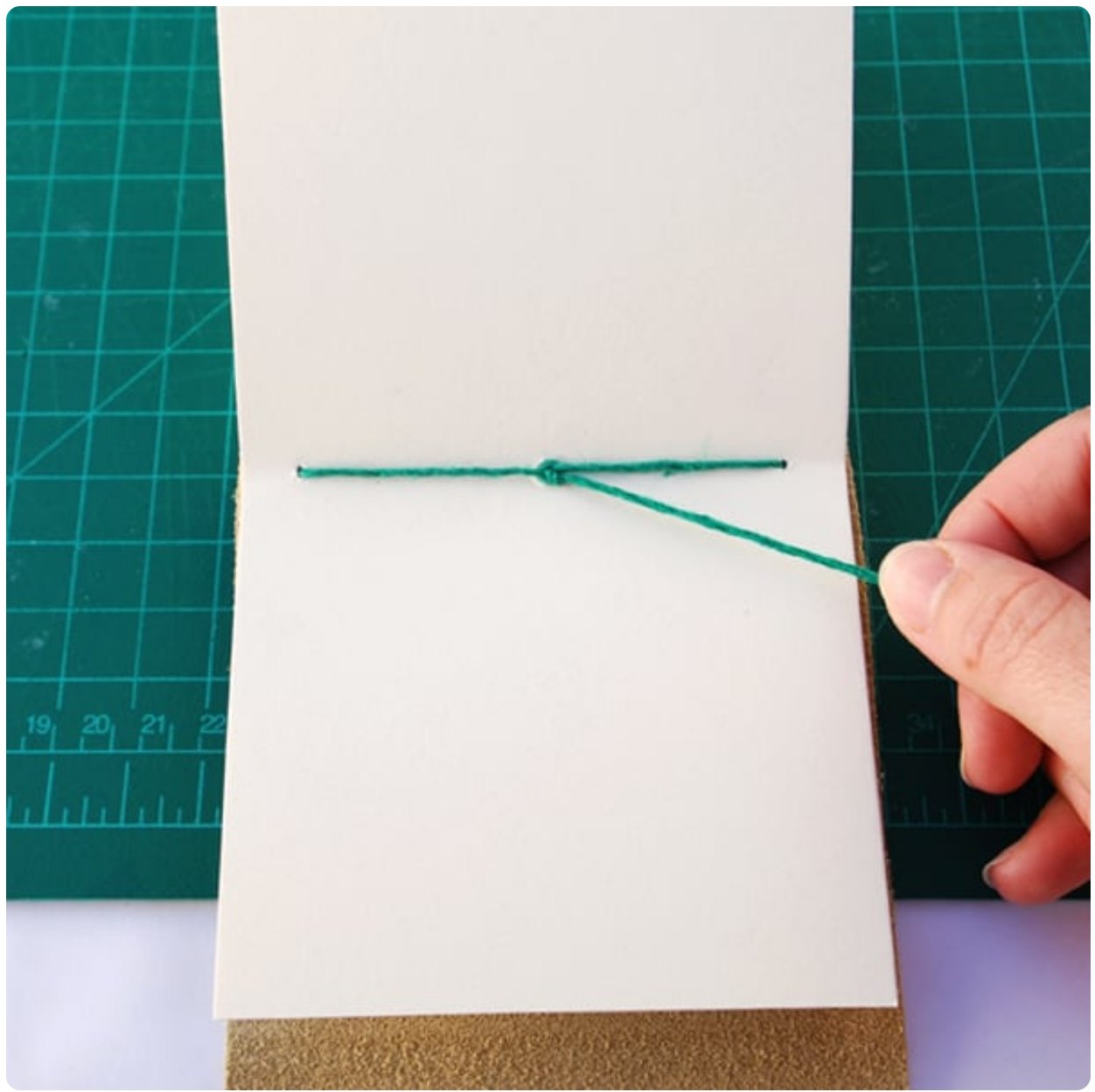


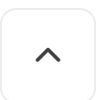
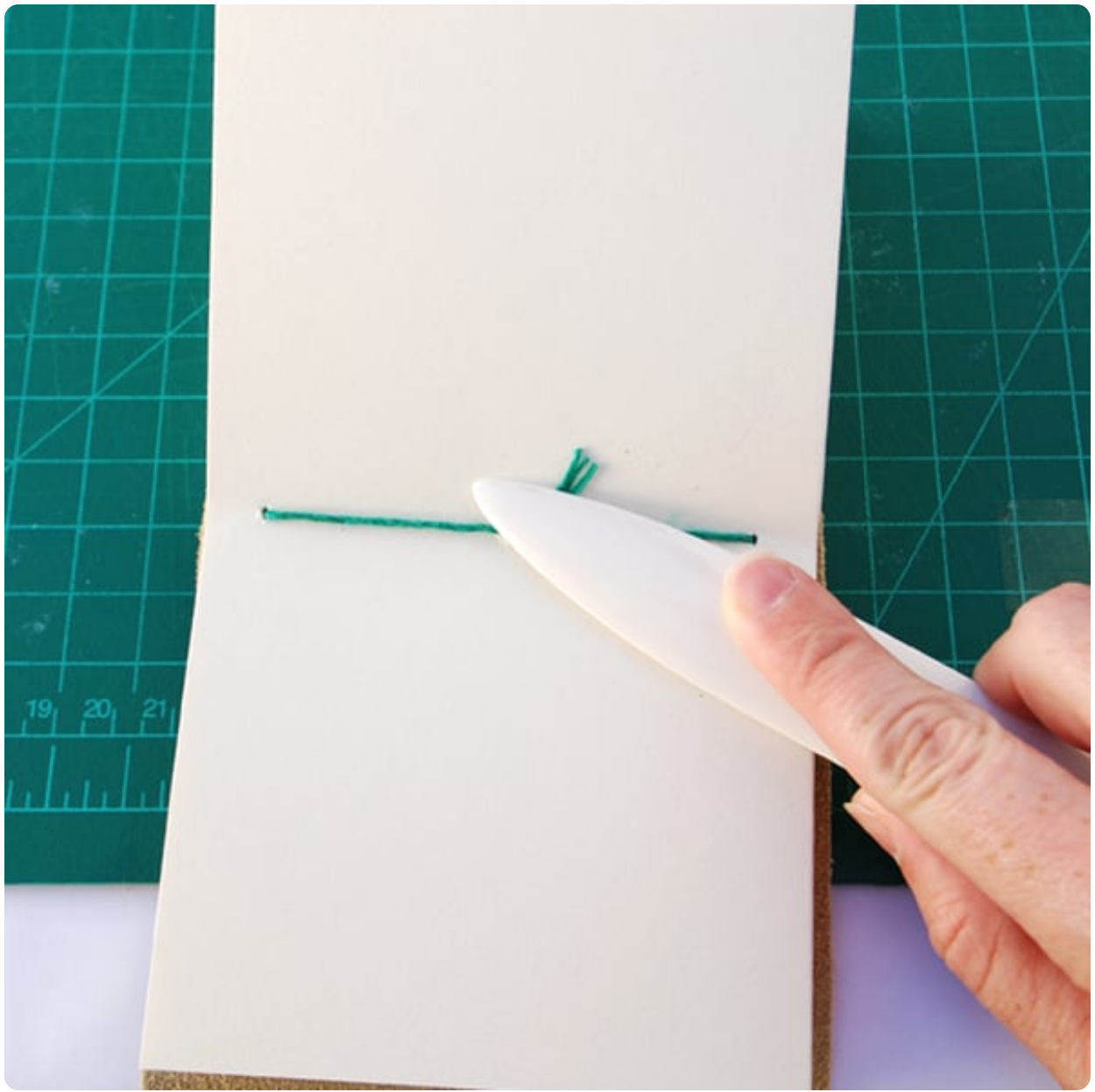
This time, because the binding ended with a stitch in through hole no.2, the needle only goes through the cover so you can move on to the next signature.



Step 12

Continue binding until you have stitched every signature. End your binding with the thread on the inside of the last signature. Tie a simple knot - exactly like you did in Step 7.







7. Attach a Closure for Your Book

There are many ways to close a book. For this tutorial you can use a simple braid made of linen thread.

Step 1

Braid six strands of linen thread so it can wrap around the book at least three and a half times.





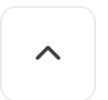
Step 2

Cut a 1cm (approx 1/4in) long slit about 2cm (approx 3/4in) in from the end of the cover that overlaps the other side. Make the slit just big enough for your braid to slip through.



Step 3

Push one end of the braid through the slit and make a knot.





8. Run Out of Thread? Make a Weaver's Knot!

An arm's length of thread is the best length to work with when binding, but you will probably run out of thread. When bookbinders run out of thread, they use the weaver's knot to tie on a new length. To make a weaver's knot, follow the steps below.

Step 1

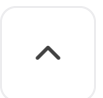
Make two loops with a new length of thread.





Step 2

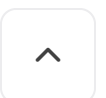
Twist the first knot around once.





Step 3

Insert the second loop through the front of the first one.

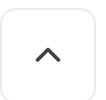






Step 4

While holding the second loop, pull tight.

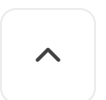






Step 5

Now pull the end of the old thread through the back of your loop.





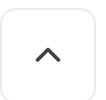
Step 6

Here it gets a little tricky. You want to weave the end of the old thread under the longer end of the new thread. If you imagine the loop as a head and two legs, the old thread would weave behind the longer leg.



Step 7

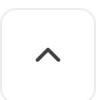
Then pull the old thread back out through the front of the loop.





Step 8

Pull the whole thing very tightly.





Step 9

Trim the ends of the knot.

Wrap It Up!

Look at that - you've made a beautifully bound leather book. Totally amazing!

In this tutorial I showed you how to finish a long-stitch binding, which involved cutting a text block, cutting out a leather cover, making and cutting holes in



the signatures, cutting holes in the cover, and binding your book.

I also showed you how to make a very handy weaver's knot, which is a skill you can use time and again in your bookbinding projects. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did!



Need any help with this tutorial? Have a tip? Would you like to share the book you made? We would love to read your questions or comments in the section below!





By Erica Munoz

Like



Every type of asset, for any type of project

Plus all the leading gen-AI tools

Start creating



ENVATO TUTS+

[About Envato Tuts+](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Privacy](#)

[Cookies](#)

[Cookie Settings](#)

[Do not sell or share my personal information](#)

HELP

[FAQ](#)

[Help Center](#)



23,005
Tutorials

552
Courses

17,964
Translations

Certified



Corporation



